COUNSELS BY THE WAY

BY

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NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1921

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THE WORKS OF

HENRY VAN DYKE

AVALON EDITION

VOLUME XV

MESSAGES AND PERSUASIONS

II

"I will make you fishers of men" Matthew IV:19

From a painting by E. Zimmermann, courtesy of the Hanfstaengl Gallerie

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THE FOOT-PATH TO PEACE

To be glad of life, because it gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look up at the stars; to be contented with your possessions, but not satisfied with yourself until you have made the best of them; to despise nothing in the world except falsehood and meanness, and to fear nothing except cowardice; to be governed by your admirations rather than by your disgusts; to covet nothing that is your neighbour's except his kindness of heart and gentleness of manners; to think seldom of your enemies, often of your friends, and every day of Christ; and to spend as much time as you can, with body and with spirit, in God's out-of-doors—these are little guide-posts on the foot-path to peace.

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COUNSELS BY THE WAY

I

SHIPS AND HAVENS

I

PILGRIMS OF THE SEA

OF all the things that man has made, none is so full of interest and charm, none possesses so distinct a life and character of its own, as a ship.

"Ships are but boards," says Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. But we feel that this is a thoroughly wooden opinion, one of those literal judgments which stick to the facts and miss the truth. Ships have something more in them than the timbers of which they are made. There is a spirit within their ribs, a significance in their histories.

The common language in which we speak of them is an unconscious confession of this feeling. We say of a ship, "She sails well. She minds her helm quickly. We wish her a prosperous voyage." We endow her with personality; and, as if to acknowledge the full measure of our interest, we express it in terms which belong to the more interesting sex.

One reason for this is undoubtedly the fact that the ship appears to us as a traveller to an unseen, and often an unknown, haven. It is the element of mystery, of adventure, that fascinates our imagination, and draws our sympathy after it. When this is wanting, the ship loses something of her enchantment.

There is a little cottage where I have spent many summers on the sleepy southern shore of Long Island. From the white porch we could look out upon a shallow, land-locked bay. There we saw, on every sunny day, a score of sailboats, flickering to and fro on the bright circle of water, with no aim but their own motion in the pleasant breeze. It was a flock of little play-ships,—it brought no stir to the thought, no thrill to the emotions.

From the upper windows of the house the outlook surpassed a long line of ragged sand-dunes, and ranged across

"*The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.*"

There went the real ships, of all shapes and sizes, of all rigs and models; the great steamers, building an airy pillar of cloud by day, a flashing pillar of fire by night; the ragged coasters, with their patched and dingy sails; the slim, swift yachts, hurrying by in gala dress, as if in

haste to arrive at some distant, merry festival of Neptune's court. Sometimes they passed in groups, like flights of plover; sometimes in single file, like a flock of wild swans; sometimes separate and lonely, one appearing and vanishing before the next hove in sight.

When the wind was from the north they hugged the shore. With a glass one could see the wrinkled, weather-beaten face of the man at the wheel, and the short pipe smoking between his lips. When the wind was southerly and strong they kept far away, creeping along the rim of the horizon. On a fair breeze they dashed along, wing and wing, with easy, level motion. When the wind was contrary they came beating in and out, close-hauled, tossing and labouring over the waves. It was a vision of endless variety and delight. But behind it all, giving life and interest to the scene, was the invisible thought of the desired haven.

Whither is she travelling, that long, four-masted schooner, with all her sails set to catch the fickle northwest breeze? Is it in some languid bay of the West Indies, or in some rocky harbour of Patagonia, amid the rigours of the far southern winter, that she will cast anchor? Where is she bound, that dark little tramp-steamer, trailing voluminous black smoke be-

hind her, and buffeting her way to the eastward in the teeth of the rising gale? Is it in some sunlit port among the bare purple hills of Spain, or in the cool shadows of some forest-clad Norwegian fiord, that she will find her moorings? Whither away, ye ships? What haven?

How often, and how exquisitely, this question of ships and havens has been expressed by the poets (in prose and verse), who translate our thoughts for us. Longfellow recalls a dream of his childhood in the seaport town of Portland:

> *"I remember the black wharves and the slips,*
> *And the sea-tides tossing free;*
> *And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,*
> *And the beauty and mystery of the ships,*
> *And the magic of the sea.*
> *And the voice of that wayward song*
> *Is singing and saying still:*
> *'A boy's will is the wind's will,*
> *And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.'"*

George William Curtis wanders down to the Battery, and meditates on "Sea from Shore": "The sails were shaken out, and the ship began to move. It was a fair breeze perhaps, and no steamer was needed to tow her away. She receded down the bay. Friends turned back, —I could not see them,—and waved their

hands, and wiped their eyes, and went home to dinner. Farther and farther from the ships at anchor, the lessening vessel became single and solitary upon the water. The sun sank in the west; but I watched her still. Every flash of her sails, as she tacked and turned, thrilled my heart. . . . I did not know the consignees nor the name of the vessel. I had shipped no adventure, nor risked any insurance, nor made any bet, but my eyes clung to her as Ariadne's to the fading sail of Theseus."

And here is a bit of Rudyard Kipling's gusty music from *The Seven Seas:*

"The Liner she's a lady, an' she never looks nor 'eeds—
The Man-o'-War's 'er 'usband, an' 'e gives 'er all she needs;
But, oh, the little cargo-boats, that sail the wet seas roun',
They're just the same as you and me, a-plyin' up an' down!"

But it is Wordsworth who has given the best expression to the feeling that rises within us at sight of a journeying ship:

"Where lies the Land to which yon Ship must go?
Fresh as a lark mounting at break of day
Festively she puts forth in trim array;
Is she for tropic suns, or polar snow?
What boots the inquiry?—Neither friend nor foe
She cares for; let her travel where she may
She finds familiar friends, a beaten way
Ever before her, and a wind to blow.

Yet still I ask, what haven is her mark?
And, almost as it was when ships were rare
(From time to time, like Pilgrims, here and there
Crossing the waters), doubt, and something dark,
Of the old Sea some reverential fear
Is with me at thy farewell, joyous Bark!"

Is not this a parable of the way in which we look out, in our thoughtful moods, upon the ocean of human life, and the men and women who are voyaging upon it? In them also the deepest element of interest is that they are in motion. They are all going somewhither. They are distinct, individual, separate. We single them out one by one. Each is a voyager, with a port to seek, a course to run, a fortune to experience. The most interesting question that we can ask in regard to them is: Whither bound? What haven?

But this inquiry comes to us now not as an idle or a curious question. For, first of all, we feel that these men and women are not strangers to us. We know why we take a personal interest in one more than in another. We know why we "pursue them with a lover's look." It is as if the "joyous Bark" carried some one that we knew, as if we could see a familiar face above the bulwarks, and hear a well-beloved voice hailing us across the waves. And then

we realize that we also are *en voyage*. We do not stand on the shore as spectators; we, too, are out on the ocean, sailing. All the "reverential fear of the old Sea," the peril, the mystery, the charm, of the voyage, come home to our own experience. The question becomes pressing, urgent, importunate, as we enter into the depth of its meaning. Surely there is nothing that we can ever ask ourselves in which we have a closer, deeper interest, or to which we need to find a clearer, truer answer, than this simple, direct question: *What is our desired haven in the venturesome voyage of life?*

II

WHITHER BOUND?

Wherever you are, and whoever you may be, there is one thing in which you and I are just alike at this moment, and in all the moments of our existence. We are not at rest; we are on a journey. Our life is a movement, a tendency, a steady, ceaseless progress towards an unseen goal. We are gaining something, or losing something, every day. Even when our position and our character seem to remain precisely the same, they are changing. For the mere advance of time is a change. It is not

the same thing to have a bare field in January and in July. The season makes the difference. The limitations that are childlike in the child are childish in the man.

Everything that we do is a step in one direction or another. Even the failure to do something is in itself a deed. It sets us forward or backward. The action of the negative pole of a magnetic needle is just as real as the action of the positive pole. To decline is to accept—the other alternative.

Are you richer to-day than you were yesterday? No? Then you are a little poorer. Are you better to-day than you were yesterday? No? Then you are a little worse. Are you nearer to your port to-day than you were yesterday? Yes,—you must be a little nearer to some port or other; for since your ship was first launched upon the sea of life, you have never been still for a single moment; the sea is too deep, you could not find an anchorage if you would; there can be no pause until you come into port.

But what is it, then, the haven towards which you are making? What is the goal that you desire and hope to reach? What is the end of life towards which you are drifting or steering?

There are three ways in which we may look

at this question, depending upon the point of view from which we regard human existence.

When we think of it as a work, the question is, "What do we desire to accomplish?"

When we think of it as a growth, a development, a personal unfolding, the question is, "What do we desire to become?"

When we think of it as an experience, a destiny, the question is, "What do we desire to become of us?"

Do not imagine for an instant that these questions can be really separated. They are interwoven. They cross each other from end to end of the web of life. The answer to one question determines the answer to the others. We cannot divide our work from ourselves, nor isolate our future from our qualities. A ship might as well try to sail north with her jib, and east with her foresail, and south with her mainsail, as a man to go one way in conduct, and another way in character, and another way in destiny.

What we do belongs to what we are; and what we are is what becomes of us.

And yet, as a matter of fact, there is a difference in these three standpoints from which we may look at our life; and this difference not only makes a little variation in the view that we

take of our existence, but also influences unconsciously our manner of thinking and speaking about it. Most of the misunderstandings that arise when we are talking about life come from a failure to remember this. We are looking at the same thing, but we are looking from opposite corners of the room. We are discussing the same subject, but in different dialects.

Some people—perhaps the majority—are of a practical turn of mind. Life seems to them principally an affair of definite labour directed to certain positive results. They are usually thinking about what they are to do in the world, and what they are to get for it. It is a question of occupation, of accomplishment, of work and wages.

Other people—and I think almost all serious-minded people when they are young, and life still appears fresh and wonderful to them—regard their existence from the standpoint of sentiment, of feeling, of personality. They have their favourite characters in history or fiction, whom they admire and try to imitate. They have their ideals, which they seek and hope to realize. Some vision of triumph over obstacles, and victory over enemies, some model of manhood or womanhood, shines before them. By that standard they test and measure them-

selves. Towards that end they direct their efforts. The question of life, for them, is a question of attainment, of self-discipline, of self-development.

Other people—and I suppose we may say all people at some time or other in their experience—catch a glimpse of life in still wider and more mysterious relations. They see that it is not really, for any one of us, an independent and self-centred and self-controlled affair. They feel that its issues run out far beyond what we can see in this world. They have a deep sense of a future state of being towards which we are all inevitably moving. This movement cannot be a matter of chance. It must be under law, under responsibility, under guidance. It cannot be a matter of indifference to us. It ought to be the object of our most earnest concern, our most careful choice, our most determined endeavour. If there is a port beyond the horizon, we should know where it lies and how to win it. And so the question of life, in these profound moods which come to all of us, presents itself as a question of destiny.

Now, if we are to understand each other, if we are to get a view of the subject which shall be anything like a well-rounded view, a complete view, we must look at the question from all

three sides. We must ask ourselves: What is our desired haven, first, in achievement; and second, in character; and last, in destiny?

III

THE HAVEN OF WORK

Surely we ought to know what it is that we really want to do in the world, what practical result we desire to accomplish with our lives. And this is a question which it will be very wise to ask and answer before we determine what particular means we shall use in order to perform our chosen work and to secure the desired result. A man ought to know what he proposes to make before he selects and prepares his tools. A captain should have a clear idea of what port he is to reach before he attempts to lay his course and determine his manner of sailing.

All these minor questions of ways and means must come afterwards. They cannot be settled at the outset. They depend on circumstances. They change with the seasons. They are many paths to the same end. One may be best to-day; another may be best to-morrow. The wind and the tide make a difference. One way may be best for you, another way for me. The

build of the ship must be taken into consideration. A flat-bottomed craft does best in the shallow water, along shore. A deep keel is for the open sea.

But before we make up our minds how to steer from day to day, we must know where we are going in the long run. Then we can shape our course to fit our purpose. We can learn how to meet emergencies as they arise. We can change our direction to avoid obstacles and dangers. If we keep the thought of our desired haven clearly before us, all the other points can be more easily and wisely settled; and however devious and difficult the voyage may be, it will be a success when we get there.

I am quite sure that a great deal of the confusion and perplexity of youth, and a great deal of the restlessness and fickleness which older people often criticize so severely and so unjustly, come from the attempt to choose an occupation in life before the greater question of the real object of our life-work has been fairly faced and settled. "What are you going to do when you grow up?" This is the favourite conundrum which the kind aunts and uncles put to the boys when they come home from school; and of late they are beginning to put it to the girls also, since it has been reluctantly admitted

that a girl may rightly have something to say about what she would like to do in the world. But how is it possible to make anything more than a blind guess at the answer, unless the boy or the girl has some idea of the practical end which is to be worked for. To choose a trade, a business, a profession, without knowing what kind of a result you want to get out of your labour, is to set sail in the dark. It is to have a course, but no haven; an employment, but no vocation.

There are really only four great practical ends for which men and women can work in this world,—Pleasure, Wealth, Fame, and Usefulness. We owe it to ourselves to consider them carefully, and to make up our minds which of them is to be our chief object in life.

Pleasure is one aim in life, and there are a great many people who are following it, consciously or unconsciously, as the main end of all their efforts. Now, pleasure is a word which has a double meaning. It may mean the satisfaction of all the normal desires of our manhood in their due proportion, and in this sense it is a high and noble end. There is a pleasure in the intelligent exercise of all our faculties, in the friendship of nature, in the perception of truth, in the generosity of love, in the achievements of

heroism, in the deeds of beneficence, in the triumphs of self-sacrifice. "It is not to taste sweet things," says Carlyle, "but to do true and noble things, and vindicate himself under God's Heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, the dullest day-drudge kindles into a hero."

But pleasure as we commonly speak of it means something very different from this. It denotes the immediate gratification of our physical senses and appetites and inclinations. There is a free gift of pleasant sensation attached by the Creator to the fulfilment of our natural propensions. The taking of food, for example, not only nourishes the body, but also gratifies the palate; the quenching of thirst is agreeable to the senses as well as necessary to the maintenance of life. No sane and wholesome thinker has ventured to deny that it is lawful and wise to receive this gratuitous gift of pleasure, and rejoice in it, as it comes to us in this world wherein God has caused to grow "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." But when we make the reception of the agreeable sensation the chief end and motive of our action, when we direct our will and our effort to the attainment of this end, then we enter

upon a pleasure-seeking life. We make that which should be our servant to refresh and cheer us, our master to direct and rule and drive us.

The evil nature of this transformation is suggested in the very names which we give to human conduct in which the gratification of the senses has become the controlling purpose. The man who lives for the sake of the enjoyment that he gets out of eating and drinking is a glutton or a drunkard. The man who measures the success and happiness of his life by its physical sensations, whether they be coarse and brutal or delicate and refined, is a voluptuary.

A pleasure-seeking life, in this sense, when we think of it clearly and carefully, is one which has no real end or goal outside of itself. Its aim is unreal and transitory, a passing thrill in nerves that decay, an experience that leads nowhere, and leaves nothing behind it. Robert Burns knew the truth of what he wrote:

> *"But pleasures are like poppies spread,*
> *You seize the flower, the bloom is shed!"*

The man who chooses pleasure as the object of his life has no real haven, but is like a boat that beats up and down and drifts to and fro, merely to feel the motion of the waves and the

impulse of the wind. When the voyage of life is done he has reached no port, he has accomplished nothing.

One of the wisest of the ancients, the Stoic philosopher Seneca, wrote a letter to his brother Gallio (the Roman governor before whom St. Paul was tried in Corinth), in which he speaks very frankly about the folly of a voluptuous life. "Those who have permitted pleasure to lead the van . . . lose virtue altogether; and yet they do not possess pleasure, but *are possessed by it*, and are either tortured by its absence, or choked by its excess, being wretched if deserted by it, and yet more wretched if overwhelmed by it; like those who are caught in the shoals of the Syrtes, and at one time are stranded on dry ground, and at another tossed on the furious billows. . . . As we hunt wild beasts with toil and peril, and even when they are caught find them an anxious possession, for they often tear their keepers to pieces, even so are great pleasures: they turn out to be great evils, and take their owners prisoner."

This is the voice of human prudence and philosophy. The voice of religion is even more clear and piercing. St. Paul says of the pleasure-seekers: "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame,

who mind earthly things." And in another place, lest we should forget that this is as true of women as it is of men, he says: "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." That saying is profoundly true. It goes to the bottom of the subject. A pleasure-seeking life is a living death, because its object perishes even while it is attained, and at the end nothing is left of it but dust and corruption.

Think of the result of existence in the man or woman who has lived chiefly to gratify the physical appetites; think of its real emptiness, its real repulsiveness, when old age comes, and the senses are dulled, and the roses have faded, and the lamps at the banquet are smoking and expiring, and desire fails, and all that remains is the fierce, insatiable, ugly craving for delights which have fled for evermore; think of the bitter, burning vacancy of such an end,—and you must see that pleasure is not a good haven to seek in the voyage of life.

But what of wealth as a desired haven? When we attempt to consider this subject we have especial need to follow Dr. Samuel Johnson's blunt advice and "clear our minds of cant." There is a great deal of foolish railing against wealth, which takes for granted, now that it is an unsubstantial and illusory good,

and now that it is not a good at all, but only an unmixed evil, and the root of all other evils. Many preachers and moralists talk about wealth in this way, but they do not really think about it in this way. They know better. And when young people discover and observe the curious inconsistency between the teacher's words and his thoughts, as illuminated by his conduct, they are likely to experience a sense of disappointment, and a serious revulsion from doctrine which does not seem to be sincere.

Wealth is simply the visible result of human labour, or of the utilization of natural forces and products, in such a form that it can be exchanged. A gallon of water in a mountain lake is not wealth. But the same gallon of water conveyed through an aqueduct and delivered in the heart of a great city represents a certain amount of wealth, because it has a value in relation to the wants of men. A tree growing in an inaccessible forest is not wealth. But a stick of timber which can be delivered in a place where men are building houses is a bit of wealth.

Now, the symbol and measure of wealth is money. It is the common standard by which the value of different commodities is estimated, and the means by which they are exchanged.

It is not a dream nor a delusion. It is something real and solid. It is deserving of our respect under certain conditions and within certain limitations. The man who professes an absolute contempt for money is either a little of a fool or a good deal of a fraud. It represents a product of labour and a form of power. It is worth working for. When a man has won it, there it is—a fact and a force. He can handle it, use it, dispose of it, as he chooses.

But stop a moment; let us think! Is that altogether true? It is partly true, no doubt; for every particle of wealth, or of its symbol, money, is an actual possession of which its owner can dispose. But it is not the whole truth; for the fact is that he *must* dispose of it, because that is the only way in which it becomes available as wealth. A piece of money in an old stocking is no more than a leaf upon a tree. It is only when the coin is taken out and used that it becomes of value. And the nature of the value depends upon the quality of the use.

Moreover, it is not true that a man can dispose of his money *as he chooses*. The purposes for which it can be used are strictly bounded. There are many things that he cannot buy with it; for example, health, long life, wisdom,

a cheerful spirit, a clear conscience, peace of mind, a contented heart.

You never see the stock called Happiness quoted on the exchange. How high would it range, think you,—a hundred shares of Happiness Preferred, guaranteed seven per cent?

And there are some things that a man cannot do with his wealth. For instance, he cannot carry it with him when he dies. No system of transfer has been established between the two worlds; and a large balance here does not mean a balance on the other side of the grave. The property of Dives did not fall in value when he died, and yet he became a pauper in the twinkling of an eye.

There is no question but that those who live to win wealth in this world have a more real and substantial end in view than the mere pleasure-seekers. But the thing that we ought to understand and remember is precisely what that end is. It is the acquisition in our hands of a certain thing whose possession is very brief, and whose value depends entirely upon the use to which it is put. Now, if we make the mere gaining of that thing the desired haven of our life, we certainly spend our strength for naught, and our labour for that which satisfieth not. We narrow and contract our whole existence.

We degrade it by making it terminate upon something which is only a sign, a symbol, behind which we see no worthy and enduring reality. It is for this reason that the "blind vice" of avarice, as Juvenal calls it, has been particularly despised by the wise of all lands and ages. There is no other fault that so quickly makes the heart small and hard.

> *"They soon grow old who grope for gold*
> *In marts where all is bought and sold;*
> *Who live for self, and on some shelf*
> *In darkened vaults hoard up their pelf;*
> *Cankered and crusted o'er with mould,*
> *For them their youth itself is old."*

Nor is there any other service that appears more unprofitable and ridiculous in the end, when the reward for which the money-maker has given his life is stripped away from him with a single touch, and he is left with his trouble for his pains.

> *"If thou art rich, thou'rt poor;*
> *For like an ass whose back with ingots bows,*
> *Thou bear'st thy heavy burden but a journey,*
> *And death unloads thee."*

But perhaps you imagine that no one is in danger of making that mistake, no one is so

foolish as to seek wealth merely for its own sake. Do you think so? Then, what shall we say of that large class of men, so prominent and so influential in modern society, whose energies are desperately consecrated to the winning of great fortunes?

So far as their life speaks for them, they have no real ambition beyond that. They are not the leaders in noble causes, the sustainers of beneficent enterprises. They have no refined and elevated tastes to gratify. They are not the promoters of art or science, the adorners of their city with splendid buildings, the supporters of humane and beautiful charities. They have no large plans, no high and generous purposes. They have no public spirit, only an intense private greed. All that we can say of them is that they are rich, and that they evidently want to be richer.

They sit like gigantic fowls brooding upon nests of golden eggs, which never hatch. Their one desire is not to bring anything out of the eggs, but to get more eggs into their nest. It is a form of lunacy,—auromania.

But let us not suppose that these notorious examples are the only ones who are touched with this insanity. It is just the same in the man who is embittered by failure, as in the

man who is elated by success; just the same in those who make it the chief end of life to raise their hundreds of dollars to thousands, as in those who express their ambition in terms of seven figures.

Covetousness is idolatry of wealth. It may be paid to a little idol as well as to a big one. Avarice may be married to Poverty, and then its offspring is named Envy; or it may be married to Riches, and then its children are called Purse-pride and Meanness. Some people sell their lives for heaps of treasure, and some for a scant thirty pieces of silver, and some for nothing better than a promissory note of fortune, without endorsement.

There are multitudes of people in the world to-day who are steering and sailing for Ophir, simply because it is the land of gold. What will they do if they reach their desired haven? They do not know. They do not even ask the question. They will be rich. They will sit down on their gold.

Let us look our desires squarely in the face! To win riches, to have a certain balance in the bank and a certain rating on the exchange, is a real object, a definite object; but it is a frightfully small object for the devotion of a human life, and a bitterly disappointing compensation

for the loss of an immortal soul. If wealth is our desired haven, we may be sure that it will not satisfy us when we reach it.

Well, then, what shall we say of fame as the chief end of life? Here, again, we must be careful to discriminate between the thing itself and other things which are often confused with it. Fame is simply what our fellow-men think and say of us. It may be world-wide; it may only reach to a single country or city; it may be confined to a narrow circle of society. Translated in one way, fame is glory; translated in another way, it is merely notoriety. It is a thing which exists, of course; for the thoughts of other people about us are just as actual as our thoughts about ourselves, or as the character and conduct with which those thoughts are concerned. But the three things do not always correspond.

You remember what Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes says, in *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, about the three Johns:

1. The real John; known only to his Maker.

2. John's ideal John; never the real one, and often very unlike him.

3. Thomas's ideal John; never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either.

Now, the particular object of the life that

makes fame its goal is this last John. Its success consists in the report of other people's thoughts and remarks about us. Bare, naked fame, however great it may be, can never bring us anything more than an instantaneous photograph of the way we look to other men.

Consider what it is worth. It may be good or bad, flattering or painfully truthful. People are celebrated sometimes for their vices, sometimes for their follies. Anything out of the ordinary line will attract notice. Notoriety may be purchased by a colossal extravagance or a monumental absurdity. A person has been made notorious simply by showing himself "more kinds of a fool" than any one else in the community.

Many men would be famous for their vanity alone, if it were not so common that it no longer serves as a mark of distinction. We often fancy that we are occupying a large place in the attention of the world, when really we do not even fill a pin-hole.

To be governed in our course of life by a timorous consideration of what the world will think of us is to be even lighter and more fickle than a weathercock. It is to be blown about by winds so small and slight that they could not even lift a straw outside of our own versatile imagination.

For what is "the world," for whose admiration, or envy, or mere notice, we are willing to give so much? "Mount up," says a wise man, "in a monomania of vanity, the number of those who bestow some passing thought upon you, as high as you dare; and what is this 'world' but a very few miserable items of human existence, which, when they disappear, none will miss, any more than they will miss thyself?"

There is one point in which fame differs very essentially from wealth and pleasure. If it comes to us without being well earned it cannot possibly be enjoyed. A pleasure may arrive by chance, and still it will be pleasant. A sum of money may be won by a gambler, and still it is real money; he can spend it as he pleases. But fame without a corresponding merit is simply an unmitigated burden. I cannot imagine a more miserable position than that of the poor scribbler who allowed his acquaintances to congratulate him as the writer of George Eliot's early stories. To have the name of great wisdom, and at the same time to be a very foolish person, is to walk through the world in a suit of armour so much too big and too heavy for you that it makes every step a painful effort. To have a fine reputation and a mean character is to live a lie and die a sham. And this is the

danger to which every one who seeks directly and primarily for fame is exposed.

One thing is certain in regard to fame: for most of us it will be very brief in itself; for all of us it will be transient in our enjoyment of it.

When death has dropped the curtain we shall hear no more applause. And though we fondly dream that it will continue after we have left the stage, we do not realize how quickly it will die away in silence, while the audience turns to look at the new actor and the next scene. Our position in society will be filled as soon as it is vacated, and our name remembered only for a moment,—except, please God, by a few who have learned to love us, not because of fame, but because we have helped them and done them some good.

This thought brings us, you see, within clear sight of the fourth practical aim in life,—the one end that is really worth working for,—usefulness. To desire and strive to be of some service to the world, to aim at doing something which shall really increase the happiness and welfare and virtue of mankind—this is a choice which is possible for all of us; and surely it is a good haven to sail for.

The more we think of it, the more attractive and desirable it becomes. To do some work

that is needed, and to do it thoroughly well; to make our toil count for something in adding to the sum total of what is actually profitable for humanity; to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before, or, better still, to make one wholesome idea take root in a mind that was bare and fallow; to make our example count for something on the side of honesty, and cheerfulness, and courage, and good faith, and love—this is an aim for life which is very wide, as wide as the world, and yet very definite, as clear as light. It is not in the least vague. It is only free; it has the power to embody itself in a thousand forms without changing its character. Those who seek it know what it means, however it may be expressed. It is real and genuine and satisfying. There is nothing beyond it, because there can be no higher practical result of effort. It is the translation, through many languages, of the true, divine purpose of all the work and labour that is done beneath the sun, into one final, universal word. It is the active consciousness of personal harmony with the will of God who worketh hitherto.

To have this for the chief aim in life ennobles and dignifies all that it touches. Wealth that comes as the reward of usefulness can be ac-

cepted with honour; and, consecrated to further usefulness, it becomes royal. Fame that comes from noble service, the gratitude of men, be they few or many, to one who has done them good, is true glory; and the influence that it brings is as near to godlike power as anything that man can attain. But whether these temporal rewards are bestowed upon us or not, the real desire of the soul is satisfied just in being useful. The pleasantest word that a man can hear at the close of the day, whispered in secret to his soul, is, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Christ tells us this: "He that loseth his life shall find it." "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

"*Life is divine when duty is a joy.*"

Do we accept these sailing orders? Is it really the desired haven of all our activity to do some good in the world; to carry our share of the great world's burden which must be borne, to bring our lading of treasure, be it small or great, safely into the port of usefulness? I wonder how many of us have faced the question and settled it. It goes very deep.

IV

THE HAVEN OF CHARACTER

But deeper still the question goes when we look at it in another light. Our life is made up, not of actions alone, but of thoughts and feelings and habitual affections. These taken all together constitute what we call our present character. In their tendencies and impulses and dominant desires they constitute our future character, towards which we are moving as a ship to her haven.

What is it, then, for you and me, this intimate ideal, this distant self, this hidden form of personality which is our goal?

I am sure that we do not often enough put the problem clearly before us in this shape. We all dream of the future, especially when we are young. But our dreams are too much like the modern stage, full of elaborate scenery and machinery, crowded with startling effects and brilliant costumes and magical transformations, but strangely vacant of all real character.

The stuff of which our day-dreams are made is for the most part of very cheap material. We seldom weave into them the threads of our inmost spiritual life. We build castles in Spain, and forecast adventures in Bohemia. But the

castle is without a real master. The hero of the adventure is vague and misty. We do not clearly recognize his face, or know what is in his heart.

We picture ourselves as living here or there; we imagine ourselves as members of a certain circle of society, taking our places among the rich, the powerful, the "smart set." We fancy ourselves going through the various experiences of life, a fortunate marriage, a successful business career, a literary triumph, a political victory. Or perhaps, if our imagination is of a more sombre type, we foreshadow ourselves in circumstances of defeat and disappointment and adversity. But in all these reveries we do not really think deeply of our Selves. We do not stay to ask what manner of men and women we shall be, when we are living here or there, or doing thus or so.

Yet it is an important question,—very much more important, in fact, than the thousand and one trifling interrogatories about the future with which we amuse our idle hours.

And the strange thing is that, though our ideal of future character is so often hidden from us, overlooked, forgotten, it is always there, and always potently, though unconsciously, shaping our course in life. "Every one," says

Cervantes, "is the son of his own works." But his works do not come out of the air, by chance. They are wrought out in a secret, instinctive harmony with a conception of character which we inwardly acknowledge as possible and likely for us.

When we choose between two lines of conduct, between a mean action and a noble one, we choose also between two persons, both bearing our name, the one representing what is best in us, the other embodying what is worst. When we vacillate and alternate between them, we veer, as the man in Robert Louis Stevenson's story veered, between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

We say that we "make up our minds" to do a certain thing or not to do it, to resist a certain temptation or to yield to it. It is true. We "make up our minds" in a deeper sense than we remember. In every case the ultimate decision is between two future selves, one with whom the virtue is harmonious, another with whom the vice is consistent. To one of these two figures, dimly concealed behind the action, we move forward. What we forget is that, when the forward step is taken, the shadow will be *myself*. Character is eternal destiny.

There is a profound remark in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* which throws light far down into

the abyss of many a lost life. "We are on a perilous margin when we begin to look passively at our future selves, and see our own figures led with dull consent into insipid misdoing and shabby achievement." But there is a brighter side to this same truth of life philosophy. We are on a path which leads upward, by sure and steady steps, when we begin to look at our future selves with eyes of noble hope and clear purpose, and see our figures climbing, with patient, dauntless effort, towards the heights of true manhood and womanhood. Visions like these are Joseph's dreams. They are stars for guidance. They are sheaves of promise. The very memory of them, if we cherish it, is a power of pure restraint and generous inspiration.

O for a new generation of day-dreamers, young men and maidens who shall behold visions, idealists who shall see themselves as the heroes of coming conflicts, the heroines of yet unwritten epics of triumphant compassion and stainless love. From their hearts shall spring the renaissance of faith and hope. The ancient charm of true romance shall flow forth again to glorify the world in the brightness of their ardent eyes,—

"The light that never was on land or sea,
The consecration and the poet's dream."

As they go out from the fair gardens of a visionary youth into the wide, confused, turbulent field of life, they will bring with them the marching music of a high resolve. They will strive to fulfil the fine prophecy of their own best desires. They will not ask whether life is worth living,—they will make it so. They will transform the sordid "struggle for existence" into a glorious effort to become that which they have admired and loved.

But such a new generation is possible only through the regenerating power of the truth that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." We must learn to recognize the real realities, and to hold them far above the perishing trappings of existence which men call real.

> "*The glory of our life below*
> *Comes not from what we do or what we know,*
> *But dwells for evermore in what we are.*"

"He only is advancing in life," says John Ruskin, "whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into Living peace. And the men who have this life in them are the true lords or kings of the earth—they, and they only."

Now we see what is meant by this question

of the desired haven in character. What manner of men and women do we truly hope and wish to become?

The number of ideals seems infinite. But, after all, there are only two great types. St. Paul calls them "the carnal" and "the spiritual"; and I know of no better names.

The carnal type of character, weak or strong, clever or stupid, is always self-ruled, governed by its own appetites and passions, seeking its own ends, and, even when conformed to some outward law or code of honour, obedient only because it finds its own advantage or comfort therein. There is many a man who stands upright only because the pressure of the crowd makes it inconvenient for him to stoop. "The churl in spirit" may speak fair words because of those who hear; but in his heart he says the thing that pleases him, which is vile.

The spiritual type of character is divinely ruled, submissive to a higher law, doing another will than its own, seeking the ends of virtue and holiness and unselfish love. It may have many inward struggles, many defeats, many bitter renunciations and regrets. It may appear far less peaceful, orderly, self-satisfied, than some of those who are secretly following the other ideal. Many a saint in the making seems to

be marred by faults and conflicts from which the smug, careful, reputable sensualist is exempt. The difference between the two is not one of position. It is one of direction. The one, however high he stands, is moving down. The other, however low he starts, is moving up.

We all know who it is that stands at the very summit of the spiritual pathway,—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became a perfect man, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps. We know, too, the steps in which he trod,—obedience, devotion, purity, truthfulness, kindness, resistance of temptation, self-sacrifice. And we know the result of following him, until we come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect manhood, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Which type of character do we honestly desire and expect to reach? Let us not indulge in any delusions about it. Just as surely as our faces are hardening into a certain expression, ugly or pleasant, and our bodies are moving towards a certain condition of health, sound or diseased, so surely are our souls moving towards a certain type of character. Along which line are we looking and steering?—along the line that leads to an older, grayer, stiffer likeness of

our present selves, with all our selfishness and pride and impurity and inconsistency and discontent confirmed and hardened; or the line that ends in likeness to Christ?

Surely we are voyaging blindly unless we know what haven of character our souls are seeking. Surely we are making a poor and fatal choice, unless we direct our course to the highest and the noblest goal. To know Christ is life eternal. To become like Christ is success everlasting.

V

THE LAST PORT

There is still one more way of putting this question about our desired haven,—a way perhaps more common than the others, and therefore probably more natural, though I cannot believe that it is more important. It is, in fact, simply a carrying on of the first two questions beyond the horizon of mortal sight, a prolongation of the voyage of life upon the ocean of eternity.

Almost all of us have an expectation, however dim and misty, of an existence of some kind after we have crossed the bar of death. Even those who do not believe that this existence will

be conscious, those who suppose that death ends all, so far as our thought and feeling are concerned, and that the soul goes out when the heart stops,—even the doubters of immortality foresee a certain kind of a haven for their lives in the deep, dreamless, endless sleep of oblivion. There is no one now living who does not owe a clear and definite answer to the question: Where do you wish and expect to go when you die?

I think we have no right to try to separate this question of our haven after death from the questions in regard to our present aspirations and efforts in conduct and character. For every one who considers it soberly must see that our future destiny cannot possibly be anything else than the consequence of our present life. Whether it be a state of spiritual blessedness, or an experience of spiritual woe, or simply a blank extinction, it will come as the result of the deeds done in the body. It will be the fitting and inevitable arrival at a goal towards which we have been moving in all our actions, and for which we have been preparing ourselves by all the secret affections and hopes and beliefs which we are daily working into our characters.

But there is a reason, after all, and a very profound reason, why we should sometimes put

this question of our desired haven after death in a distinct form, and why we should try to give a true and honest answer to it, with an outlook that goes beyond the grave.

It is because the answer will certainly determine our conduct now, and there is every reason to believe that it will affect the result hereafter.

Men say that the future life is only a possibility, or at best a probability, and that it is foolish to waste our present existence in the consideration of problems to which the only answer must be a "perhaps," or "I hope so," or "I believe so." But is it not one of the very conditions of our advance, even in this world, that we should be forever going forward along lines which lie altogether in the region of the probable, and for which we have no better security than our own expectation and wish that they shall lead us to the truth, anticipated, but as yet unproved and really unknown?

"So far as man stands for anything," writes Professor William James, the psychologist, in *The Will to Believe*, "and is productive or originative at all, his entire vital function may be said to have to deal with *maybes*. Not a victory is gained, not a deed of faithfulness or courage is done, except upon a maybe; not a service, not a sally of generosity, not a scientific explora-

tion or experiment or text-book, that may not be a mistake. It is only by risking our persons from one hour to another that we live at all. And often enough our faith beforehand in an uncertified result *is the only thing that makes the result come true.*"

Surely this is certain enough in regard to the difference between this present life as a dull and dismal struggle for the meat and drink that are necessary for an animal existence, and as a noble and beautiful conflict for moral and spiritual ends. *It is the faith that makes the result come true.* As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he, and so is his world. For those whose thoughts are earthly and sensual, this is a beast's world. For those whose thoughts are high and noble and heroic, it is a hero's world. The strength of wishes transforms the very stuff of our existence, and moulds it to the form of our heart's inmost desire and hope.

Why should it not be true in the world to come? Why should not the eternal result, as well as the present course, of our voyaging depend upon our own choice of a haven beyond the grave? Christ says that it does. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

If the immortal life is a reality, is it not reasonable to think that the first condition of our attaining it is that we should personally wish for it, and strive to enter into it? And must not our neglect or refusal to do this be the one thing that will inevitably shut us out from it, and make our eternity an outer darkness?

Mark you, I do not say that it is reasonable to suppose that we must be absolutely certain of the reality of heaven in order to arrive thither.

We may have many doubts and misgivings. But deep down in our hearts there must be the wish to prove the truth of this great hope of an endless life with God, and the definite resolve to make this happy haven the end of all our voyaging.

This is what the apostle means by "the power of an endless life." The passion of immortality is the thing that immortalizes our being. To be in love with heaven is the surest way to be fitted for it. Desire is the magnetic force of character. Character is the compass of life. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself."

What is your desired haven beyond the grave? It is for you to choose. There are no secret books of fate in which your course is traced, and your destiny irrevocably appointed. There

is only the Lamb's book of life, in which new names are being written every day, as new hearts turn from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. No ship that sails the sea is as free to make for her port as you are to seek the haven that your inmost soul desires. And if your choice is right, and if your desire is real, so that you will steer and strive with God's help to reach the goal, you shall never be wrecked or lost.

For of every soul that seeks to arrive at usefulness, which is the service of Christ, and at holiness, which is the likeness of Christ, and at heaven, which is the eternal presence of Christ, it is written: *So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.*

II

THE WORTH OF A MAN

"How much, then, is a man better than a sheep?"—Matt. 12:12.

TO him who first spoke these noble words they were an exclamation; for he knew, as no one else has ever known, "what was in man." But to us, who repeat them, they often seem like a question; for we are so ignorant of what is best in ourselves and our fellow-men, we have so confused ourselves with artificial views and theories, that we find ourselves at the point to ask in perplexity, How much, then, is a man better than a sheep?

It is evident that the answer to this question must depend upon the view that we take of life.

Suppose, in the first place, that we take a materialistic view of life. We shall then deny all evidence except that which we receive through our senses. Looking at the world from this standpoint, we shall see in it a great mass of matter, curiously regulated by laws which

have results but no purposes, and agitated into various modes of motion by a secret force whose origin is, and forever must be, unknown. Life, in man as in other animals, is but one form of this force. Rising through many subtle gradations from the first tremor that passes through the gastric nerve of a jelly-fish to the most delicate vibration of gray matter in the brain of a Plato or a Shakespeare, it is really the same from the beginning to the end,—physical in its birth among the kindred forces of heat and electricity, physical in its decay and extinction as the causes which sustain it are gradually weakened or suddenly cut off. The only difference between man and the other animals is a difference of degree. The ape takes his place in our ancestral tree, and with the sheep we must acknowledge at least a cousinship.

It is true that we have somewhat the advantage of these poor relations. We belong to a more fortunate branch of the family, and have entered upon an inheritance considerably enlarged by the extinction of collateral branches. But, after all, it is the same inheritance; and there is nothing in humanity which is not derived from, and destined to, earth and ashes and dust.

If, then, you accept this view of life, what

answer can you give to the question, How much is a man better than a sheep? You must say: He is a little better, but not much. In some things he has the advantage. He lives longer, and has more powers of action and capacities of pleasure. He is more clever, and has succeeded in making the sheep subject to his domination. But the balance is not all on one side. The sheep has fewer pains, as well as fewer pleasures; less toil, as well as less power. If it does not know how to cut a coat, at least it succeeds in growing its own natural wool clothing, and that without taxation. Above all, the sheep is not troubled with any of those vain dreams of moral responsibility and future life which are the cause of such great and needless trouble to humanity. The flocks that fed in the pastures of Bethlehem got just as much physical happiness out of existence as the shepherd David who watched them; and, being natural agnostics, they were free from David's errors in regard to religion. They could give all their attention to eating, drinking, and sleeping, which is the chief end of life. From the materialistic standpoint, a man may be a little better than a sheep, but not much.

Or suppose, in the second place, that we take the commercial view of life. We shall then say

that all things must be measured by their money value, and that it is neither profitable nor necessary to inquire into their real nature or their essential worth. Men and sheep are worth what they will bring in the open market; and this depends upon the supply and demand. Sheep of a very rare breed have been sold for as much as five or six thousand dollars. But men of common stock, in places where men are plenty and cheap (as for example in Central Africa), may be purchased for the price of a rusty musket or a piece of cotton cloth. According to this principle, we must admit that the comparative value of a man and a sheep is a very uncertain matter, and that there are times when the dumb animal is much the more valuable of the two.

Of course, you perceive that this view, carried out to its logical conclusions, means slavery; and you call my attention to the fact that slavery has been abolished by common consent of the civilized world. Yes, thank God, that is true. We have done away with the logical conclusion. In this land, at least, men and sheep are no longer put up at the same block to be disposed of to the highest bidder. We have gotten rid of the logical conclusion. But have we gotten rid entirely of the premise on which it rested?

Does not the commercial view of life still prevail in civilized society?

"How much is that man worth?" asks the curious inquirer. "That man," answers the animated Commercial Registry and Business Directory, "is worth a million dollars; and the man sitting next to him is not worth a penny." What other answer can be given by one who judges everything by a money standard? If wealth is really the measure of value, if the end of life is the production or the acquisition of riches, then humanity must take its place in the sliding scale of commodities. Its value is not fixed and certain. It depends upon accidents of trade. We must learn to look upon ourselves and our fellow-men purely from a business point of view, and to ask only: What can this man make? how much has that man made? how much can I get out of this man's labour? how much will that man pay for my services? Those little children that play in the squalid city streets,—they are nothing to me or to the world; there are too many of them, they are worthless. Those long-fleeced, high-bred sheep that feed in my pastures, they are among my most costly possessions, they will bring an enormous price, they are immensely valuable. How much is a man better than a sheep? What a

foolish question! Sometimes the man is better; sometimes the sheep is better. It all depends upon the supply and demand.

Now these two views of life, the materialistic and the commercial, always have existed and do still exist in the world. Men have held them consciously and unconsciously. At this very day there are some who profess them; and there are many who act upon them, although they may not be willing to acknowledge them. They have been the parents of countless errors in philosophy and sociology; they have bred innumerable vices and shames and cruelties and oppressions in the human race. It was to break these deadly falsehoods, to sweep them away from the mind and heart of humanity, that Jesus Christ came into the world. We cannot receive his gospel in any sense, we cannot begin to understand its meaning and purpose, unless we fully, freely, and sincerely accept his great revelation of the divine dignity and inestimable value of man as man.

We say this was his revelation. Undoubtedly it is true that Christ came to reveal God to man. But undoubtedly it is just as true that he came to reveal man to himself. He called himself the Son of God, but he called himself also the Son of Man. His nature was truly

divine, but his nature was no less truly human. He became man. And what is the meaning of that lowly birth in the most helpless form of infancy, if it be not to teach us that humanity is so related to Deity that it is capable of receiving and embodying God himself? He died for man. And what is the meaning of that sacrifice, if it be not to teach us that God counts no price too great to pay for the redemption of the human soul? This gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ contains the most ennobling doctrine of humanity that ever has been proclaimed on earth. It is the only certain cure for low and debasing views of life. It is the only doctrine from which we can learn to think of ourselves and our fellow-men as we ought to think. Consider for a little while the teachings of Jesus Christ in regard to the dignity and worth of a man.

Suppose, then, that we come to him with this question: How much is a man better than a sheep? He tells us that a man is infinitely better, because he is the child of God, because he is capable of fellowship with God, and because he is made for an immortal life. This threefold answer shines out not only in the words, but also in the deeds, and above all in the death, of the Son of God and the Son of Man.

I. Think, first of all, of the dignity of a man, as the offspring and the likeness of God. This was not a new doctrine first proclaimed by Christ. It is clearly taught in the magnificent imagery of the Book of Genesis. The chief design of that great picture of the beginnings is to show that a Personal Creator is the source and author of all things that are made. But next to that, and almost, perhaps altogether, of equal importance, is the design to show that man is superior to all the other works of God,—that the distance between him and the lower animals is not a difference in degree, but a difference in kind; yes, the difference is so great that we must use a new word to describe the origin of humanity, and if we speak of the stars and the earth, the trees and the flowers, the fishes, the birds and the beasts, as the works of God, when man appears we must find a nobler name and say, This is more than God's work, it is God's child.

Our human consciousness confirms this testimony and answers to it. We know that there is something in us which raises us above the things that we see and hear and touch, and the creatures that appear at least to spend their brief life in the automatic workings of sense and instinct. These powers of reason and affection

and conscience, and above all this wonderful power of free will, the faculty of swift, sovereign, voluntary choice, belong to a higher being. We say not to corruption, Thou art my father, nor to the worm, Thou art my mother; but to God, Thou art my father, and to the Great Spirit, In thee was my life born. Frail and mortal as our physical existence may be, in some respects the most frail, the most defenseless among animals, we are yet conscious of something that lifts us up and makes us supreme. "Man," says Pascal, "is but a reed, the feeblest thing in nature; but he is a reed that thinks. It needs not that the universe arm itself to crush him. An exhalation, a drop of water, suffice to destroy him. But were the universe to crush him, man is yet nobler than the universe, for he knows that he dies, and the universe, even in prevailing against him, knows not its power."

Now the beauty and strength of Christ's doctrine of man lie not in the fact that he was at pains to explain and defend and justify this view of human nature, but in the fact that he assumed it with an unshaken conviction of its truth, and acted upon it always and everywhere. He spoke to man, not as the product of Nature, but as the child of God. He took it for granted that we are different from plants and animals,

and that we are conscious of the difference. "Consider the lilies," he says to us, "the lilies cannot consider themselves: they know not what they are, nor what their life means; but you know, and you can draw the lesson of their lower beauty into your higher life. Regard the birds of the air: they are dumb and unconscious dependents upon the Divine bounty, but you are conscious objects of the Divine care; are you not of more value than many sparrows?" Through all his words we feel the thrilling power of this high doctrine of humanity. He is always appealing to reason, to conscience, to the power of choice between good and evil, to the noble and godlike faculties in man.

And now think for a moment of the fact that his life was voluntarily, and of set purpose, spent among the poorest and humblest of mankind. Remember that he spoke not to philosophers and scholars, but to peasants and fishermen and the little children of the world. What did he mean by that? Surely it was to teach us that this doctrine of the dignity of human nature applies to man as man. It is not based upon considerations of wealth or learning or culture or eloquence. Those are the things of which the world takes account, and without which it refuses to pay any attention to us. A

mere man, in the eyes of the world, is a nobody. But Christ comes to humanity in its poverty, in its ignorance, stripped of all outward attributes and signs of power, destitute of all save that which belongs in common to mankind,—to this lowly child, this very beggar-maid of human nature, comes the King, and speaks to her as a princess in disguise, and sets a crown upon her head.

II. Christ reveals to us another and a still higher ground of the dignity of man by speaking to us as beings who are capable of holding communion with God, and reflecting the divine holiness in our hearts and lives. And here also his doctrine gains clearness and force when we bring it into close connection with his conduct. I suppose that there are few of us who would not be ready to admit at once that there are some men and women who have high spiritual capacities. For them, we say, religion is a possible thing. They can attain to the knowledge of God and fellowship with him. They can pray, and sing praises, and do holy work. It is easy for them to be good. They are born good. They are saints by nature. But for the great mass of the human race, this is out of the question, absurd, impossible. They must dwell in ignorance, in wickedness, in impiety.

But to all this Christ says, No! No, to our theory of perfection for the few. No, to our theory of hopeless degradation for the many. He takes his way straight to the outcasts of the world, the publicans and the harlots and sinners; and to them he speaks of the mercy and the love of God and the beauty of the heavenly life: not to cast them into despair; not because it was impossible for them to be good and to find God, but because it was divinely possible,—because God was waiting for them, and because something in them was waiting for God. They were lost,—but surely they never could have been lost unless they had first of all belonged to God; and this makes it possible for them to be found again. They were prodigals,—but surely the prodigal is also a child, and there is a place for him in the father's house. He may dwell among the swine, but he is not one of them; he is capable of remembering his father's love, he is capable of answering his father's embrace, he is capable of dwelling in his father's house in filial love and obedience.

That is the doctrine of Christ in regard to fallen and disordered and guilty human nature. It is fallen, it is disordered, it is guilty; but the capacity of reconciliation, of holiness, of love to God, still dwells in it, and may be quickened

into a new life. That is God's work, but God himself could not do it if man were not capable of it.

Do you remember the story of the portrait of Dante which is painted upon the walls of the Bargello, at Florence? For many years it was supposed that the picture had utterly perished. Men had heard of it, but no one living had ever seen it. But presently came an artist who was determined to find it again. He went into the place where tradition said that it had been painted. The room was used as a storehouse for lumber and straw. The walls were covered with dirty whitewash. He had the heaps of rubbish carried away. Patiently and carefully he removed the whitewash from the wall. Lines and colours long hidden began to appear. And at last the grave, lofty, noble face of the great poet looked out again upon the world of light.

"That was wonderful," you say, "that was beautiful!" Not half so wonderful as the work which Christ came to do in the heart of man,—to restore the likeness of God and bring the divine image to the light. He comes to us with the knowledge that God's image is there, though concealed. He touches us with the faith that the likeness can be restored. To have upon

our hearts the impress of the divine nature, to know that there is no human being in whom that treasure is not hidden, and from whose stained and dusty soul Christ cannot bring out that reflection of God's face,—that, indeed, is to feel the dignity and value of humanity, and to know that a man is better than a sheep!

III. There is yet one more element in Christ's teaching in regard to the dignity and value of man; and that is his doctrine of immortality. This truth springs inevitably out of his teaching in regard to the origin and capacity of human nature. A being formed in the divine image, a being capable of reflecting the divine holiness, is a being so lofty that he must have also the capacity of entering into a life which is not dependent upon the nourishment of meat and drink, and in which the spiritual powers shall be delivered from the bondage of sense and the fear of death, so that they may be unfolded to perfection. All that Christ teaches about man, all that Christ offers to do for man, links him to a vast and boundless future.

This idea of immortality runs through everything that Jesus says and does. Never for a moment does he speak to man as a creature of this present world. Never for a moment

does he forget, or suffer us to forget, that our largest and most precious interests lie in the world to come. He would arouse our souls to perceive and contemplate the immense issues of life. The perils that beset us here through sin are not brief and momentary dangers, possibilities of disgrace in the eyes of men, of suffering such limited pain as our bodies can endure in the disintegrating process of disease, of dying a temporal death, which at the worst can only cause us a few hours of anguish. A man might bear these things, and take the risk of this world's shame and sickness and death, for the sake of some darling sin. But the truth that flashes on us from the word of Christ, is that the consequence of sin is the peril of losing an immortal spirit.

On the other hand, the opportunities that come to us here, through the grace of God, are not merely opportunities of temporal peace and happiness, they are chances of securing endless and immeasurable felicity, wealth that can never be counted or lost, peace that the world can neither give nor take away. We must understand that now the kingdom of God has come near unto us. It is a time when the doors of heaven are open. We may gain an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not

away. We may lay hold, not only on a present joy of holiness, but on an everlasting life with God.

It is thus that Christ looks upon the children of men, not as herds of dumb driven cattle, but as living souls moving onward to eternity. It is thus that he dies for men, not to deliver them from brief sorrows, but to save them from final loss, and to bring them into bliss that knows no end. It is thus that he speaks to us, in solemn words before which our dreams of earthly pleasure and power and fame and wealth are dissipated like unsubstantial vapours: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

There never was a time in which Christ's doctrine of the dignity and value of a man as man was more needed than it is to-day. There is no truth more important and necessary for us to take into our hearts, and hold fast, and carry out in our lives. For here we stand in an age when the very throng and pressure and superfluity of human life lead us to set a low estimate upon its value. The air we breathe is heavy with materialism and commercialism. The lowest and most debasing views of human nature

are freely proclaimed and unconsciously accepted. There is no escape, no safety for us, save in coming back to Christ, and learning from him that man is the child of God, made in the divine image, capable of the divine fellowship, and of an immortal life. There are three practical reasons why we need to learn this.

We need to learn it in order to understand the real meaning, and guilt, and danger, and hatefulness of sin. Men are telling us, nowadays, that there is no such thing as sin. It is a dream, a delusion. It must be left out of account. All the evils in the world are natural and inevitable. They are simply the secretions of human nature. There is no more shame or guilt connected with them than with the malaria of the swamp, or the poison of the nightshade.

But Christ tells us that sin is real, and that it is the enemy, the curse, the destroyer of mankind. It is not a part of man as God made him; it is a part of man as he has unmade and degraded himself. It is the marring of the divine image, the ruin of the glorious temple, the self-mutilation and suicide of the immortal soul. It is sin that casts man down into the mire. It is sin that drags him from the fellowship of God into the company of beasts. It is sin that

leads him into the far country of famine, and leaves him among the swine, and makes him fain to fill his belly with the husks that the swine do eat. Therefore we must hate sin, and fear it, and abhor it, always and everywhere. When we look into our own hearts and find sin there, we must humble ourselves before God, and repent. Every sin that nestles within us is a part of the world's shame and misery. Every selfish desire that stirs within our souls is a part of that which has stirred up strife, and cruelty, and murder, and horrible torture, and bloody war among the children of men. Every lustful thought that defiles our imagination is a part of that which has begotten loathsome vices and crawling shames throughout the world. God hates sin because it ruins man. And when we know what that means, when we feel that same poison of evil within us, we must hate sin as he does, and bow in penitence before him, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

We need to learn Christ's doctrine of the dignity and value of humanity in order to help us to love our fellow-men. This is a thing easy to profess, but hard, bitterly hard, to do. The faults and follies of human nature are so apparent, the unlovely and contemptible and offensive qualities of many people thrust themselves so

sharply upon our notice and repel us so constantly, that we are tempted to shrink back wounded and disappointed, and to relapse into a life that is governed by its disgusts. If we dwell in the atmosphere of a Christless world, if we read only those newspapers which chronicle the crimes and meannesses of men, or those realistic novels which deal with the secret vices and corruptions of humanity, and fill our souls with the unspoken conviction that virtue is an old-fashioned dream, and that there is no man good, no woman pure, I do not see how we can help despising and hating mankind. Who shall deliver us from this spirit of bitterness? Who shall take us by the hand and lead us out of this heavy, fetid air of the lazar-house and the morgue? None but Christ. If we will go with him, he will teach us not to hate our fellow-men for what they are, but to love them for what they may become. He will teach us to look not for the evil which is manifest, but for the good which is hidden. He will teach us not to despair, but to hope, even for the most degraded of mankind. And so, perchance, as we keep company with him, we shall learn the secret of that divine charity which fills the heart with peace, and joy, and quiet strength. We shall learn to do good unto all men as we have oppor-

tunity, not for the sake of gratitude or reward, but because they are the children of our Father, and the brethren of our Saviour. We shall learn the meaning of that blessed death on Calvary, and be willing to give ourselves as a sacrifice for others, knowing that he that turneth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Finally, we need to accept and believe Christ's doctrine of the dignity and value of humanity in order that it may lead us personally to God and a higher life. You are infinitely better and more precious than the dumb beasts. You know it, you feel it, you are conscious that you belong to another world. And yet it may be that there are some of you who forget it, and live as if there were no God, no soul, no future life. Your ambitions are fixed upon the wealth that corrodes, the fame that fades; your desires are towards the pleasures that pall upon the senses; you are bartering immortal treasure for the things which perish in the using. The time is coming when you must lie down like the dumb beast and crumble into dust. Nay, not like the beast, for to you shall come in that hour the still, small voice saying, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee."

Thy soul,—why not think of it now? The

image of God is impressed upon it. The one thing needful for you is to know, and love, and serve him who is the father of your spirit.

Come then to Christ, who can save you from the sin which defiles and destroys your manhood. Come then to Christ, who can make you good men and true, living in the power of an endless life. Come then to Christ, that you may have fellowship on earth with the Son of Man, and dwell with the Son of God forever, and behold his glory.

III

FAITH

"Without faith it is impossible to please him."—Heb. 11 : 6.

THIS is a short statement of a large truth. The plain language lends force and dignity to the thought. It needs no embroidered words, no jewelry of speech, to set it off. For truth, like beauty, shows best with least adornment.

In trying to unfold the meaning of this text I would fain keep to that simplicity and clearness of which it gives us such a good model. There is no reason why religion should be made dark and difficult by talking about it in long, unfamiliar, antiquated words which cause people to wish for a dictionary; nor is there any excuse for seeking to win the wonder and astonishment of men by obscure sayings and curious comparisons,—mountains of eloquence which labour long and violently to produce a little mouse of practical sense. In ancient times the teachers of the people were told to read in the book of the Law of God distinctly, and give the sense,

and cause the people to understand the meaning. To reach that result no pains are too great, no effort is too costly. I would rather spend five days in trying to make a text clear and level to the mind, to open the door of it so that any one could walk in, than five minutes in trying to make it strange and mysterious, to cover it with all kinds of ornaments and arabesques so that nobody should be able to find the keyhole and unlock the door.

Religion is full of mysteries. The object of the Bible is not to increase them, but to remove them. If a certain amount of mystery still remains, it lies in the subject, and not in the way in which it is treated. For the most part, the teachings and rules of the Scriptures are so clear and direct that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein; they shed light and not darkness; they disperse the clouds to reveal the sun.

Take the declaration of the text: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." How easy it is to see just why the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews inserted that sentence where it stands! He is writing about the heroes of faith,—the men and women who, from the very beginning of the world, have been bound together into one company by this great principle

of all true and noble life. Among them he counts the patriarch Enoch. But as we look back to the brief record of Enoch's life in the Book of Genesis, we find that not a word is said there about his faith. By what right, then, is he included in the list? Why is he counted among the faithful? "I will tell you why," says the writer of the Epistle: "it is because he obtained this testimony, that he pleased God. This is proof positive that he must have had faith. Where you find a flower, you know there must have been a seed. Where you find a river, you know there must be a spring. Where you see a flame, you know there must be a fire. Where you find a man beloved and blessed of God, you know there must be faith. Whether it is recorded or not, whether you can see it or not, it must be there, germ of his virtue, fountain-head of his goodness, living source of warmth and light; for without faith it is impossible to please God."

How simple and how beautiful is that phrase, —to please God. What a sense of nearness to the Divine Being it gives us. How it discloses God's nature and character. What a noble statement of the true aim of life.

God can be pleased, then. He is not a cold abstraction, an immovable substance, a dull,

unimpassioned, silent, joyless, mighty force. He is a person, capable of affections and emotions. He is a heart that feels. Delight is no stranger to him. His love is no vague, blind impulse, flowing dumbly towards all things alike. It is a seeking, choosing love; and when it finds the object of its search, a thrill of gladness passes through it, larger, purer than we can understand, and yet like that which comes to us when we see the fairest and the best. He approves and blesses. His Spirit is filled with the music of pleasure.

To waken that music, to win that approval, to please God,—surely that is the highest and holiest object for a human life.

To please men is a natural impulse. There is no one who does not desire in some degree to obtain the liking and favour of his fellow-creatures. But presently, as we come to know by experience how shallow and how fickle are the fashions of the world, how false and often how impure are the motives by which the liking of the crowd is influenced, how easily it is gained by accident and lost by chance, we begin to see that this kind of surface favour is deceitful, and to look for something better.

To please good men,—that is a nobler ambition. To win the confidence and honour of

those who are honest and earnest and upright; to speak some word, to do some deed, to exercise some virtue, of which those who think deep thoughts, and lead pure lives, and perform noble actions, shall say, "That was right, that was true, that was kind, that was brave,"—this is a motive which has always been potent in the most generous breasts, restraining them from evil, nerving them to heroic efforts, stimulating them to dare and to do.

But there is a motive deeper and more intense than even this: it is the desire to please that one among our fellow-creatures whom we have chosen, it may be, as the most loyal heart and true; to pluck some flower from the lofty crags of duty; to win some honourable trophy in the world's great battlefield,—yes, even though that trophy be but the scar received in warring for the right, the banner which has been torn and stained in an unequal conflict, but never dishonoured; to do something, to endure something, which shall really please the one who is to us the best and dearest on earth,—how many a soul has been quickened, and uplifted, and strengthened to face danger, disgrace, and death by that profound desire!

But to please God, the perfect, radiant Being, the most wise, the most holy, the most beauti-

ful, the most loving of all Spirits; to perform some task, achieve some victory, bring some offering that shall be acceptable to him, and in which he shall delight; simply to live our life, whatever it may be, so that he, the good and glorious God, shall approve and bless it, and say of it, "Well done," and welcome it into his own joy,—that is a divine ambition.

"What vaster dream could hit the mood
Of love on earth?"

It has sustained martyrs at the stake, and comforted prisoners in the dungeon, and cheered warriors in the heat of perilous conflict, and inspired labourers in every noble cause, and made thousands of obscure and nameless heroes in every hidden place of earth. It is the pillar of light which shines before the journeying host. It is the secret watchword of the army, given not to the leaders alone, but flashing like fire through all the ranks. When that thought descends upon us, it kindles our hearts and makes them live. What though we miss the applause of men; what though friends misunderstand, and foes defame, and the great world pass us by? There is One that seeth in secret, and followeth the soul in its toils and struggles,—the great King, whose approval is honour, whose

love is happiness; to please him is success, and victory, and peace.

There are a million ways of pleasing him, as many as the characters of men, as many as the hues and shades of virtue, as many as the conflicts between good and evil, as many as the calls to honest labour, as many as the opportunities of doing right and being good. That is the broad meaning of this eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, with its long roll of different achievements, with its list of men and women of every age, of every quality and condition, slaves and freemen, leaders and followers, warriors and statesmen, saints and sinners, and silent martyrs, and nameless conquerors; there are a million ways of pleasing God, but not one without faith. Numberless forms of energy, but none without heat. Myriad colours of beauty, but none without light. All is cold and black until the sun shines. A universe of possibilities of goodness spreads before us, but not one of them can be realised unless we have faith. For without faith it is impossible to please God.

But why should this be so? Is it an arbitrary requirement which the Divine Being makes of his creatures, or is there a deep reason for it in the nature of men and the conditions of human life? I do not believe that God is ever arbi-

trary. He is indeed omnipotent, and he has the power to demand of us whatsoever he will. But there is always a wise and holy reason in his demands. Sometimes we cannot understand it; it lies too deep for us. But sometimes we can understand it; it lies within our reach. And in the present case I think we can easily see just why faith is necessary to the success of every effort to please him.

Faith is not a strange and far-away thing. It is a principle of common life. We exercise it every day. It is simply the confidence in something which is invisible; as the Apostle says, "it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Every time you receive the testimony of your fellow-men, every time you trust in the qualities of their character which are beyond the reach of your vision, every time you rely upon a law of logic in an argument, upon a law of nature in your action, upon a law of morality in your conduct, you exercise faith. It is the condition of reason, of activity, of human society. "All polities and societies," says a wise observer, "have come into existence through the trust of men in each other," and, we may add, through their trust in unseen principles of equity, and in future results of prudence, and in One higher than them-

selves whom they could neither see nor name. Take away confidence in the invisible, and the whole fabric decays, crumbles, and falls in ruin.

Thus, even from the human point of view, faith is necessary. But from the Divine point of view, it must appear infinitely more essential.

Man is made to know as much as possible, to do as much as possible, and to be as good as possible. In the sphere of knowledge, in the sphere of action, in the sphere of character, faith is the one element that gives life and power to please God.

I. Look first at the sphere of knowledge, the understanding of the world and of life. We stand in a strange and mysterious universe, with certain faculties to help us to a comprehension of it. First, we have the senses, and they tell us how things look, and taste, and sound, and feel. Then we have the reasoning powers, and they enable us to discover how things are related to each other, how causes are followed by effects, how great laws control their action and reaction. But is there not something beyond this, a depth below the deep and a height beyond the height? Every instinct of our nature assures us that there must be. The lesson of modern thought is the limitation of science and philosophy. But outside of this narrow

circle lie the truths that we most desire and need to know. In that unexplored world dwells God. Why should we hesitate to confess that we must have another and a higher faculty of knowledge? The astronomer has keen eyes, but he knows their limitation, and he does no discredit to them when he uses the telescope to bring near the unseen stars. The entomologist has quick sight, but he does not disparage it when he turns to the microscope to search a drop of water for its strange, numberless forms of life. Reason is excellent and forceful, but beyond its boundaries there is a realm which can only be discerned by faith. Where science ends, where philosophy pauses, faith begins.

"By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear."

Mark the words: By faith we understand. It is a principle of comprehension, then, not of confusion; something which clarifies and enlarges the vision. It discloses not only the origin but also the purpose and the meaning of things. It is not the contradiction, but the crown and complement of reason. How can God be pleased with any knowledge from which this element is left out?

Suppose that you had written a book, and some one should take it up and measure it, and say: "This curious object is composed of cloth, paper, ink, glue, and thread. It is seven inches long, five inches wide, and two inches thick; it contains five hundred pages and a hundred thousand words, and I wonder where it came from and what it is for." Would that please you?

Suppose that you had carved a statue, and some one should find it and say: "This remarkable stone is composed of carbonate of lime; it is very smooth and white, and it weighs about six hundred pounds, and I think I have explained it perfectly." Would that satisfy you? Would you not be better pleased with the child, or the ignorant peasant, who stood and looked at your statue and felt its beauty, and recognized that it had been made by some one to represent a great and beautiful idea?

The world was made for its meaning, to show forth the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. If we do not see that, we see nothing. We may be able to tell how many stars are in the Milky Way; we may be able to count the petals of every flower, and number the bones of every bird; but unless faith leads us to a deeper understanding, a more reverent comprehension of the

significance of the universe, God can no more be pleased with our knowledge than the painter is pleased with the fly which touches his picture with its feelers, and sips the varnish from the surface, and dies without dreaming of the meaning, thought, feeling, embodied in the colours. But on the simplest soul that feels the wonder and the hidden glory of the universe, on the child to whom the stars are little windows into heaven, or the poet to whom

"the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,"

God looks down with pleasure and approval. For in such a soul he sees the beginning of faith, which is able to pass behind the appearance to the reality, and make its possessor wise unto everlasting life.

II. Turn now to the sphere of action. Here faith is no less necessary. There are some who would persuade us that believing is appropriate only to infancy and old age; that it is a kind of dreaming, an infirmity of the weak and visionary. But the truth is otherwise. Carlyle says: "Belief is great, life-giving. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes. A man lives by believing something, not by debating and arguing about

many things." Faith is power. It makes men strong, ardent, persistent, heroic. Nothing truly great has ever been done in any department of the world's work without faith. Think of the faith of our explorers and discoverers,—Columbus, who found the New World; the Pilgrim Fathers, who planted it with life; Livingstone, who opened a new continent to civilization. Think of the faith of our men of science,—Galileo, Kepler, Newton, Faraday, Henry. Think of the faith of the reformers,—Wyclif, Luther, Knox. Think of the faith of the martyrs,—Polycarp, Huss, Savonarola, the Covenanters of Scotland, the Huguenots of France. Faith is a force, and those who grasp it lay hold of something which is able to make them mightier than themselves.

Let a man fasten himself to some great idea, some large truth, some noble cause, even in the affairs of this world, and it will send him forward with energy, with steadfastness, with confidence. This is what Emerson meant when he said, "Hitch your wagon to a star." These are the potent, the commanding, the enduring, the inspiring men,—in our own history, men like Washington and Lincoln. They may fall, they may be defeated, they may perish; but onward moves the cause, and their souls go

with it, for they are part of it, they have believed in it.

And if the cause be divine, if the idea come from above, if the action be impelled by faith in God and a resolve to do his will, then how dauntless and impregnable does it make the heart in which it dwells! Paul standing alone against the mocking, sneering world to testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, "I believe and therefore speak:" Luther riding into the city of Worms, though every housetop were thronged with devils, and appearing alone before the imperial council, "Here stand I, I cannot do otherwise, God help me:" Morrison, the first missionary to China, standing alone on the deck of the ship that bears him to a strange and hostile world: "Do you think," says the captain, "that you will make an impression upon 400,000,000 Chinese?" "No, sir," is the reply, "but I believe that God will:"—that is faith,—everywhere and always the victory that overcometh the world.

Sometimes it seems to me as if there were only one great and essential difference among the multitudes of people who inhabit this earth. Moving about among them, coming into contact with them, I find that some men and women seem unreal, hollow, visionary, masks without

faces, costumes without character. They run in the grooves of custom, they drift to and fro on the currents of fashion, they are blown up and down by the winds of popular opinion; even when they seem to lead, it is only as the lightest leaf is carried along foremost by the wind. They are only animated shadows, without principle or probity, without conviction or consistency, without faith or fidelity. But other men and women seem real, and true, and genuine. There is something behind their looks, their words, their actions. They have power to touch, and move, and satisfy the heart, because they believe. Have you never felt the difference? Do you think that God does not feel it? Can a mask, a shadow, however fair or orderly, please him? Will he withhold his approval and blessing from any real, honest, struggling, believing soul?

But perhaps some may be thinking just now: "This is the old story that the preacher is telling us; he is singing the same old song about faith,—and still faith,—and always the necessity of faith! Why not lay more emphasis on works? Surely they are more important. He has just told us that there are many ways of pleasing God. There are many courses of good conduct open to us all. If we follow any one of them,

that is enough. So long as a man's actions are right it makes no difference what lies behind them, it makes no difference whether he believes or not." Do you really think so? Is there no difference between a body without a spirit and a body with a spirit? Does not the thought, the motive, the purpose count for something?

Here are a multitude of people giving their money to support the Temple. And many rich men, standing beside the treasury, cast in their gifts; from habit, from a desire to appear well before the world, from a hope of reward. A poor widow comes with her two mites; she knows her gift will be despised, she fears it may be laughed at, but she believes that God wants her to do what she can, and that he will not refuse her offering. So her coppers fall in among the gold and the silver, and the Lord of the treasury blesses her, and says, "She hath given more than they all."

Here are two women going down to work among the sick and the poor. One goes because there is a fashion of it, because she would fain have the credit which belongs to the lady bountiful. She moves among them like an iceberg, and they hate her. She brings a chill with her which all her coals and blankets can never warm away. The other goes because she

believes in it, believes that God wants her to do it, believes that the sorrowful and the distressed are Christ's brethren, and that she is bound to them, and that they have immortal souls which she may win for him. She moves among them like a sister of Jesus and a friend of God; and of her the Master says, "Inasmuch as she hath done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, she hath done it unto me."

Here are two men praying. One stands upon the corner of the street, correct, punctilious; at the appointed time he lifts his hands, he raises his voice that he may be heard of men. The other kneels in the dust, ignorant, stammering, feeble; he lifts his face to Christ and says, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." And that broken, stammering cry of honest faith pleases God, and brings the blessing which would never come to the Pharisee though he stood on the street corner till the crack of doom.

Let us never be so foolish as to think that it makes no difference whether we believe or not. Faith is the soul of conduct; faith is the bloom, the breath, the vital power of religion; without it, virtue is the alabaster box, empty; faith is the precious ointment whose fragrance fills the house. Therefore without faith it is impossible to please God.

III. Finally, faith is necessary because it is the only possible way of contact between God and man, the only way in which he can draw near to us, and save and bless us. And that, if you will believe it, is the one thing that he most desires to do. There is no compulsion laid upon him. He does not act as one who is performing an indifferent task. He is so good that he longs to deliver us from sin and death, to bring us to himself, to give us a place in his happy kingdom. This is his glory and his delight: to rescue the perishing, to raise the fallen, to forgive the sinful, to give life to the dying. He loves this work so much that he sent his own dear Son into the world to accomplish it. And nothing that you can do will please him so much as simply to let him save you, and help you to be good.

Think for a moment: what can you do for any one who does not trust you, who does not believe in you? Nothing. That barrier of mistrust stands like a wall of ice between you and the soul that you desire to help. Is there anything that wounds you more than to be doubted and denied, and thrust away in suspicion or indifference? Truly that is the deepest and most bitter pain. Is there anything that pleases you more than to be trusted,—to have even a little child look up into your face, and put out

its hand to meet yours, and come to you confidingly? By so much as God is better than you are, by so much more does he love to be trusted.

Yes, I know you are trying to be good,—fitfully, imperfectly, yet still trying. But there is something else that God would have you do first. He would have you believe that he wants you to be good, that he is willing to help you to be good, that he has sent his Son to make you good.

There is a hand stretched out to you,—a hand with a wound in the palm of it. Reach out the hand of your faith to clasp it, and cling to it, for without faith it is impossible to please God.

IV

COURAGE

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart."—Psalm 28 : 14.

COURAGE is one of the simplest and most straightforward of the virtues; necessary, and therefore possible, for every true and noble human life.

It is a quality that we admire by instinct. We need no teacher to tell us that it is a fine thing to be brave. The lack of courage is universally recognized as a grave defect. If in our own hearts we feel the want of it, if we cannot find enough of it to enable us to face the dangers and meet the responsibilities and fight the battles of life, we are not only sorry, but secretly ashamed. The absence of courage is a fault that few are willing to confess. We naturally conceal it, and cover it up, and try to keep it secret even from ourselves. We invent favourable names for it, which are only unconscious excuses. We call it prudence, or respectability, or conservatism, or economy, or worldly wisdom,

or the instinct of self-preservation. For in truth there is nothing that we are more reluctant to admit than cowardice; and there is no virtue which we would more gladly possess and prove than courage.

In the first place, it is an honourable virtue. Men have always loved and praised it. It lends a glory and a splendour to the life in which it dwells,—lifts it up and ennobles it, and crowns it with light. The world delights in heroism, even in its rudest forms and lowest manifestations. Among the animals we create a sort of aristocracy on the basis of courage, and recognize, in the fearlessness of the game beasts and birds and fishes, a claim to rank above the timorous, furtive, spiritless members of creation.

And in man bravery is always fine. We salute it in our enemies. A daring foe is respected, and though we must fight against him we can still honour his courage, and almost forget the conflict in our admiration for his noble bearing. That is what Dr. Johnson meant by saying, "I love a good hater." The enemy who slinks and plots and conceals—makes traps and ambuscades, seeks to lead his opponent into dangers which he himself would never dare to face—is despicable, serpentine, and contemptible. But he who stands up boldly against his antagonist

in any conflict, physical, social, or spiritual, and deals fair blows, and uses honest arguments and faces the issues of warfare, is a man to love even across the chasm of strife. An outspoken infidel is nobler than a disguised skeptic. A brave, frank, manly foe is better than a false, weak, timorous friend.

The literature of courage has always been immensely popular, and the history of the brave is written in letters of gold. It is this that men have loved to read in the strange, confused annals of war,—deeds of self-forgetful daring which leap from the smoke and clamour of battle, and shine in the sudden making of splendid names. It is the quality which levels youth with age, gives to woman the force of manhood, equalizes the peasant with the noble, and consumes all outward distinctions in the flame of glory. The brave Lady Douglas thrusting her tender arm through the staple of the door to defend her king from the assassin; Leonidas at Thermopylæ, and Horatius at the bridge, and the Six Hundred at Balaklava; old Cranmer bathing his hands in fire at the martyr's stake, and young Stephen praying fearlessly for his murderers; Florence Nightingale facing fever in Crimean hospitals; Father Damien braving leprosy in the Islands of the Sea; young men and maidens, old men and

matrons, fighting, suffering, achieving, resisting, enduring, daring, living, and dying—it is the spark of heroism that kindles their names into the blaze of light, for everywhere and always courage is an honourable virtue.

In the second place, courage is a serviceable virtue. There is hardly any place in which it is not useful. There is no type of character, no sphere of action, in which there is not room and need for it.

Genius is talent set on fire by courage. Fidelity is simply daring to be true in small things as well as great. As many as are the conflicts and perils and hardships of life, so many are the uses and the forms of courage. It is necessary, indeed, as the protector and defender of all the other virtues. Courage is the standing army of the soul which keeps it from conquest, pillage, and slavery.

Unless we are brave we can hardly be truthful, or generous, or just, or pure, or kind, or loyal. "Few persons," says a wise observer, "have the courage to appear as good as they really are." You must be brave in order to fulfil your own possibilities of virtue. Courage is essential to guard the best qualities of the soul, and to clear the way for their action, and make them move with freedom and vigour.

"Courage, the highest gift, that scorns to bend
To mean devices for a sordid end;
Courage, an independent spark from Heaven's throne,
By which the soul stands raised, triumphant, high, alone;
The spring of all true acts is seated here,
As falsehoods draw their sordid birth from fear."

If we desire to be good, we must first of all desire to be brave, that against all opposition, scorn, and danger we may move straight onward to do the right.

In the third place, courage is a comfortable virtue. It fills the soul with inward peace and strength; in fact this is just what it is,—courage is simply strength of heart. Subjection to fear is weakness, bondage, feverish unrest. To be afraid is to have no soul that we can call our own; it is to be at the beck and call of alien powers, to be chained and driven and tormented; it is to lose the life itself in the anxious care to keep it. Many people are so afraid to die that they have never begun to live. But courage emancipates us and gives us to ourselves, that we may give ourselves freely and without fear to God. How sweet and clear and steady is the life into which this virtue enters day by day, not merely in those great flashes of excitement which come in the moments of crisis, but in the presence of the hourly perils, the continual

conflicts. Not to tremble at the shadows which surround us, not to shrink from the foes who threaten us, not to hesitate and falter and stand despairing still among the perplexities and trials of our life, but to move steadily onward without fear, if only we can keep ourselves without reproach,—surely that is what the Psalmist meant by good courage, and it is a most comfortable, pleasant, peaceful, and happy virtue.

Let us consider what we mean by this virtue, how we can obtain it, and what good it will do us.

I. First of all, let us try to understand the difference between courage and some of the things which are often mistaken for it.

There is a sharp distinction between courage and recklessness. The reckless man is ignorant; he rushes into danger without hesitation, simply because he does not know what danger means. The brave man is intelligent; he faces danger because he understands it and is prepared to meet it. The drunkard who runs, in the delirium of intoxication, into a burning house is not brave; he is only stupid. But the clear-eyed hero who makes his way, with every sense alert and every nerve strung, into the hell of flames to rescue some little child, proves his courage.

The more keenly we are awake to the perils of life, the higher and grander is the possibility of being truly brave. To drift along, as some people do, through this world, as if there were nothing in it to fear; to slide easily downward, as some people do, to the gate of death, as if there were nothing beyond it to fear; to sport and dance, and eat and drink and sleep, as some people do, under the arch of heaven, as if there were no One above it to fear,—what is this but the part of the fool who hath said in his heart, "There is no God, there is no sin, there is no judgment"? But to face the temptations and perplexities and dangers of the world without yielding to fear; to pass, without trembling, by the dark portals of the grave in a faith that is stronger than fear; to dare to live in the presence of the holy, mighty God in the confidence of a love that casteth out fear,—that is courage.

Then there is another sharp distinction between courage and insensibility. Some natures are so constituted that they do not feel pain very keenly. Their nerves are sluggish and deeply hidden. This may be an advantage or a disadvantage; for certainly, if they escape some possibilities of suffering, they must also lose many possibilities of enjoyment. But one thing is sure: to persons of this temperament, fear is

comparatively a stranger. They can move forward almost with indifference in situations where a more sensitive nature would be profoundly agitated. Now we must not suppose for a moment that this insensibility makes them brave. It simply exempts them in some measure from the necessity of courage. The bravest soul is that which feels the tremor and resists it, shrinks from the flame and faces it. Never was a better soldier than the old French marshal Montluc, who said that he had often gone into battle trembling, and had recovered courage only when he had said a prayer. A pale face, a shaking hand, yes, even a heart that stands still with dread, may belong to a hero who is brave enough to carry them into the midst of conflict without faltering or failing, straight on to victory or death. Courage does not consist in the absence of fear, but in the conquest of it.

Take it in little things. Here is the great, dull, heavy dray-horse; what is it for him to move stolidly on through noises which do not alarm him, and past strange objects which he does not notice? But when the high-mettled, keen-sensed thoroughbred goes through the same tumult, and past the same objects, with every nerve and muscle quivering, that is courage. It demands no great effort for the *voya-*

geur, who is inured to hardships and trained to steadiness, to guide his frail canoe through the foaming rapids. But for a woman who is by nature sensitive and timid, to sit quiet and silent in the boat, not because she has no fear, but because she will not yield to it,—that is brave.

The same thing is true in moral trials. There are some people to whom reproach and ridicule and condemnation mean little. They simply do not care; they are pachydermatous. But there are others to whom the unkind word is like a blow, and the sneer like a sword-thrust, and the breath of contempt like the heat of flames; and when they endure these things and face them, and will not be driven by them from the path of duty, they are truly courageous.

Timidity is no more inconsistent with courage than doubt is inconsistent with faith. For as faith is simply the overriding and subjugating of doubt by believing where you cannot prove, so courage is simply the conquest and suppression of fear by going straight on in the path of duty and love.

There is one more distinction that needs to be drawn,—the distinction between courage and daring. This distinction is not in kind, but in degree. For daring is only a rare and excep-

tional kind of courage. It is for great occasions; the battle, the shipwreck, the conflagration. It is an inspiration; Emerson calls it "a flash of moral genius." But courage in the broader sense is an every-day virtue. It includes the possibility of daring, if it be called for; but from hour to hour, in the long, steady run of life, courage manifests itself in quieter, humbler forms,—in patience under little trials, in perseverance in distasteful labours, in endurance of suffering, in resistance of continual and familiar temptations, in hope and cheerfulness and activity and fidelity and truthfulness and kindness, and such sweet, homely virtues as may find a place in the narrowest and most uneventful life.

There is no duty so small, no trial so slight, that it does not afford room for courage. It has a meaning and value for every phase of existence; for the workshop and for the battlefield, for the thronged city and for the lonely desert, for the sick-room and for the market-place, for the study and for the counting-house, for the church and for the drawing-room. There is courage physical, and social, and moral, and intellectual,—a soldier's courage, a doctor's courage, a lawyer's courage, a preacher's courage, a nurse's courage, a merchant's courage, a man's

courage, a woman's courage,—for courage is just strength of heart, and the strong heart makes itself felt everywhere, and lifts up the whole of life, and ennobles it, and makes it move directly to its chosen aim.

II. Now, if this is what we mean by courage, how are we to obtain it? What is it that really strengthens the heart and makes it brave?

There are many lesser things that will help us, such as a simple and wholesome visible life, plain food and vigorous exercise, a steady regard for great moral principles and ideas, a healthful course of reading, a sincere friendship with brave and true and single-minded men and women, a habit of self-forgetfulness and consecration to duty. But of these things I have not time to speak, for there is something greater and better than any of these,—something which in fact includes them all and sums them up in a word, "Wait on the Lord." That is the truest and deepest source of courage. To believe that he is, and that he has made us for himself; to love him, and give ourselves up to him, because he is holy and true and wise and good and brave beyond all human thought; to lean upon him and trust him and rest in him, with confidence that he will never leave us nor forsake us; to work for him, and suffer for his sake, and be

faithful to his service,—that is the way to learn courage.

Without God what can you do? You are a frail, weak, tempted, mortal creature. The burdens of life will crush you, the evils of sin will destroy you, the tempests of trouble will overwhelm you, the darkness of death will engulf you. But if you are joined to God, you can resist and endure and fight and conquer, in his strength. This is what the Psalmist means in the text, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart." So runs our translation. The scholars tell us that it ought to read, "Be of good courage and let thy heart be strong." But the meaning is the same. For the courage comes from the waiting on God, and he is the giver of strength to the heart.

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say, then the proud waters had gone over our souls." It was the Lord who stood by them and sustained them through the storm. Hear Paul: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And again, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." And then hear Christ: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." That is the secret of courage. The lamp that is joined to the electric current glows with light.

The soul that is joined to the infinite source of courage in God, burns steadfast, serene, and inextinguishable through life and death.

III. How will that divine courage help us if we obtain it? What will it do for us?

Everything. There is no good thing that we really desire and need that will not be brought nearer to us by this strength of heart. Every day and every hour of our lives it will be a help, a joy, a treasure, a blessing to us.

You men have to go through with your daily toil, and face the perplexities of business life, and resist the temptations to dishonesty and meanness and uncleanness which touch you on every side. You must be brave, and if you are brave in Christ you will win.

You women have to meet your daily household cares, and suffer the pains and trials which belong to a woman's life, and restrain your lips from scandal and your hearts from jealousy and envy, and keep your souls up above the deadening influences of luxury and frivolity and fashion. You must be brave,—never does courage shine more brightly than in a true woman,—and if you are brave you will "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour" with the charm of pure, unselfish, lovely character and conduct which is a rebuke to all grossness of demeanour,

and an encouragement to all knighthood and true chivalry. For such women men would even dare to die.

You boys and girls at school, young men and maidens at college, have to do your work honestly, and speak the truth fearlessly, and avoid evil companionship steadfastly, and live up to your principles modestly and firmly. You must be brave, and sometimes very brave, to do this, and if you have the right courage in the conflicts of youth you will be trained by them to play a noble part in the great battle of life.

Indeed, we all have the same need. For every one of us, there is nothing more desirable, nothing more necessary, than real strength of heart. If we can obtain it from the divine and only source, it will make our lives straight and clean and fine. It will enable us to follow Jesus of Nazareth, who was not only the purest and the gentlest, but also the bravest Spirit that ever dwelt on earth.

And do you think, if that kind of courage comes into our hearts,—the courage of faith, which believes in spite of difficulties, and fights its way through doubt to a firmer assurance; the courage of confession, which overcomes all dread of ridicule or reproach, and is not ashamed of Christ nor of his words, but ready to preach

the Gospel at Rome also; the courage of life, which goes on trying to be good in spite of failures, and holding fast to the ideal in spite of temptations, and warring for the right in spite of heavy odds, and bearing the appointed burden in spite of weariness, straight through to the end: do you think the courage of death will fail us? We do not know when we shall have to meet that last conflict, that ultimate adventure. But when the hour comes, if we have been brave enough to live aright, we shall be brave enough to die at peace.

V

POWER

"To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."
—Psalm 63 : 2.
"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."—Phil. 3 : 10.

HERE are two men separated by centuries,—the psalmist of the old dispensation and the apostle of the new dispensation,—uttering the deepest desire of their hearts. In both of them we find that there is an earnest and ardent longing to see, to know, the power of God. In both of them there is the recognition of a place, a way, in which that power is manifested and in which it may be discerned; in both of them there is the confident expectation that the knowledge of that power, when it is attained, will be potent in its spiritual effect upon their lives.

We may be quite sure that the thing for which David and Paul longed so ardently is something which we also ought to desire, and pray for, and seek after. If they needed it, we need it. If it was possible for them to find it, it is possible for us. If it was good for them, it will be good for us. Let us think about it for a little while; for it is only by thinking about

great and good things that we come to love them, and it is only by loving them that we come to long for them, and it is only by longing for them that we are impelled to seek after them, and it is only by seeking after them that they become ours.

Is not this the reason why our lives often seem so narrow and poor and weak, why they have such a sense of limitation and constriction in them, why their interests seem so trivial, their possibilities so small, their results so feeble, why we often appear to ourselves barren in thought and dry in feeling, empty of hope and bankrupt in power? Is it not because we think so much of the things that are petty and narrow and barren and transient, and so little of the things that are great and fruitful and glorious and eternal? These dry and thirsty lives of ours, these dull, stale, flat, and unprofitable lives of ours, these paltry lives,—whose fault is it that they are so? Ours, and ours alone. For the riches of an infinite wealth and the powers of an immeasurable strength are all about us waiting for us to possess and use them. But there is only one way in which we can enter into their possession, and that is by thinking about them, by considering them earnestly and steadily until they draw us to themselves.

The strength of your life is measured by the strength of your will. But the strength of your will is just the strength of the wish that lies behind it. And the strength of your wish depends upon the sincerity and earnestness and tenacity with which you fix your attention upon the things which are really great and worthy to be loved. This is what the Apostle means when he says, at the close of his description of a life which is strong, and inwardly renewed, and growing in glory even in the midst of affliction,—"while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen." It is while we look that we learn to love. It is by loving that we learn to seek. And it is in seeking that we find and are blessed.

Let us be sure, then, that it is no mere profitless speculation about mysteries of no practical value to which our double text invites us. It is a thought that enriches, ennobles, strengthens, blesses. It is a meditation by which our lives will be enlarged and uplifted and invigorated. It is for the sake of a joy which will be like music in our souls among life's discords; it is for the sake of a strength of spirit which will be to us like a wind from heaven sending us forward on our course as ships that cleave the waves and triumph against the tides; it is in order that we

may "have life, and have it more abundantly," that we are asked to think about the powerful knowledge of the power of God.

I. We may inquire, first, why should we wish to see and know the power of God?

Well, it seems to me that the vision of power is always wonderful and admirable and, in a certain sense, beautiful, and therefore a thing to be desired for its own sake. The perception of a mighty force in action, even in the physical world, confers a high and noble pleasure on the mind. When the force is sudden and violent, as in the case of a great tempest, our pleasure in beholding it is mixed with awe, it is a solemn and trembling delight; it may be overshadowed with fear, or with pity for the misfortunes of those who have been overwhelmed by the storm; yet the force in itself is magnificent, and the sight of it thrills the soul. But when it is an orderly and beneficent force that we behold, then the vision is one of pure and unmingled joy. How glorious, for example, is the sight of a great river sweeping down from its source among the mountains to its resting-place in the sea. How it forces its way among the hills, cutting through the rocks and carving a channel for itself in the solid earth, leaping boldly from the cliffs, and rushing down the steep inclines

with an energy which needs but to be harnessed to do the work of a million men,—this is power, we say, power visible, and it is a grand thing to see. And the same thing is true of the resistless tides of the ocean on which we look with unending wonder and pleasure; true also of the might of the imprisoned giant Steam, as we see it whirling the wheels of some great engine and driving the vast ship by day and night through leagues of rolling waters.

But it is far more true of those forces which are more silent and secret, like the heat of the sun, or the force of gravitation. We become aware of these forces not so much through our senses alone as through our thought, our inward perception. Look at a blade of corn cleaving the ground, and remember that all over the world countless millions upon millions of them are pushing upward with a power which taken altogether is simply incalculable; and all this lifting of tons of bread out of the earth to the hand of man is simply the drawing of the sun that shines above you. Look at the starry heavens on a clear still night; companies, regiments, battalions, armies of worlds, all marching without haste and without rest, keeping pace in their majestic orbits; and the force that binds them to their courses is the same

that quietly loosens the ripened apple from the bough and drops it at your feet. Surely a thought like this is a vision of power, and it is good for the soul.

But it is doubly good to know that it is all the power of God. To understand that all the mighty energy which throbs and pulses through the universe, comes from him, that force is but the effluence of his will, and law but the expression of his wisdom; to stand before some vast manifestation of power in nature and feel that it is only an infinitesimal fraction, only a passing play of the omnipotence of God; to see him hurl Niagara into the gulf more easily than you would pour a glass of water on the ground,—is good for the soul. It humbles and exalts. It begets that awe of spirit which is essential to true religion. We want a mighty God, one who can hold the winds and the waves in the hollow of his hand. And for our own sake, for the sake of a deeper reverence and a firmer confidence towards him, we ought to wish to see the evidence of divine power in the great elemental forces of nature.

But there is another kind of power still more wonderful, still more impressive than that of which we have been speaking. It is spiritual power,—the power which is manifested in the

conquest of evil, in the triumph of virtue, in the achievements and victories of a moral being. This is grander and more admirable than any physical force that has ever acted upon the universe of matter.

"For tho' the giant ages heave the hill
And break the shore, and evermore
Make and break, and work their will;
Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
Around us, each with different powers
And other forms of life than ours,
What know we greater than the soul?"

The vision of spiritual power, even as we see it in the imperfect manifestations of human life, is uplifting. The rush of courage along the perilous path of duty is finer than the foaming leap of the torrent from the crag. Integrity resisting temptation overtops the mountains in grandeur. Love, giving and blessing without stint, has a beauty and a potency of which the sunlight is but a faint image. When we see these things they thrill us with joy; they enlarge and enrich our souls.

And if that is true, how much more satisfying and strengthening must it be to behold the spiritual power of God? For God also is a soul, the Great Soul; the essence of his being is not physical but moral; and the secret of his

strength is in his holiness, righteousness, justice, goodness, mercy, and love. To know something of the force of the great Spirit; to see that there is no temptation that can even shake the strong foundation of his equity, no evil that can finally resist the victorious sweep of his holy will, no falsehood that can withstand the penetrating flash of his truth, nothing that can limit or exhaust the great tide of his love; to catch sight of the workings of One who is omnipotent against all foes and therefore triumphant over the last enemy, death,—that is a vision of joy and power far beyond all others, and therefore it is to be desired and prayed for and sought after with the whole heart.

But, after all, we have not yet touched the deepest and strongest reason why we should long to see and know the power of God. We have been moving hitherto upon the surface; let us pierce now to the centre. The great reason why we need to consider God's power is because we are utterly dependent on that power for the salvation of our souls. Without it there is no peace, no hope, no certainty. Unless God is mighty to save, we can never be saved.

The religion of the Bible differs from all others in two points. The first is, that it makes salvation the hardest thing in the world. The

second is, that it makes salvation the easiest thing in the world.

How lofty, how inaccessible is the standard of holiness revealed in this religion! How immense are its requirements and conditions! Other religions set before us ideals which seem by comparison like the foothills of the Jura, somewhat more elevated indeed than the surrounding valleys, but still smooth and easy, with gradual paths and footholds. But Christianity lifts Mont Blanc before our eyes, serene, remote, awful in its dazzling splendour, and bids us climb to holiness without which no man shall see God. "Be ye perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect." What hope is there of attaining to that shining height?

I wonder if any of you have ever had the feeling that has come to me in reading Christ's Sermon on the Mount. It is a feeling of great distance and almost intolerable remoteness,—a feeling as if one should come to a mighty cliff, towering far up into heaven, crowned with eternal beauty and radiance, and hear a voice crying from that far height, "Come up hither and dwell with me!" When I listen to those wonderful beatitudes, when I hear those searching demands for a purity which is stainless in deed, in word, in thought, and in feeling, when

I see how strait is the gate and how narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, a sense of utter helplessness sweeps through me and my spirit is overwhelmed within me.

And is not the same thing true even when we take shorter and more limited views of the duties and requirements of the Christian life? Here are these faults and vices and evil habits with which we have been struggling. We have used all the force that we have against them, and yet they are not extirpated. How shall they ever be conquered? Is it not a hopeless conflict? Here we have been trying to do our duty, and putting all our hearts into the effort to be good and to do good, and yet so little is accomplished, so far do we come short. More must be done; we must be better; we must live higher and holier and more useful lives. But where is strength to come from since we have already used all that we possess? How shall we overcome greater difficulties when we have already taxed ourselves to the uttermost in coming thus far? how render larger service when we have already strained our powers to the breaking-point? Next year's temptations, how shall we conquer them? Next year's work, how shall we do it?

Not even the wise and needful reminder

that the Christian life is gradual is sufficient to deliver us from this sense of helplessness. It is true, of course, that "heaven is not reached at a single bound," that only to-day's burdens are to be borne to-day, that growth in grace is like the blade and the ear and the full corn in the ear; and it helps us immensely to remember this. But, after all, this does not quite reach the heart of our trouble. Even a power which is to be gradually exercised has its limits. Steam can do so much, and no more. Electricity can do so much, and no more. But the Christian life is unlimited; it rises forever; it advances without end; its goal is perfection. What does it profit the blade of corn to go on maturing its poor little kernels, if at last it will be required to bear some celestial and imperishable fruit? What does it advantage the pilgrim to climb painfully the lower slopes, if the summit of the pass is inaccessible? Some little human goodness, some advance in virtue, we may perhaps attain; but a perfect holiness is out of our reach. Look at heaven,—a kingdom of unsullied love; look at the life of the glorified saints, sorrowless, tearless, sinless, dwelling in perfect and deathless fellowship with God,—is not that beyond our power?

Yes, it is; and yet it is the ideal set before us

in the word of God; and therefore we say that the Bible makes salvation the hardest thing in the world, makes it something that would be impossible and hopeless, if it did not at the same time make it easy and accessible and possible for every human soul. For this is what the Bible does: it reveals that our salvation is all of God; it reveals that the power that worketh in us is his power, and that it is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

And now we can see the real reason why the Psalmist and the Apostle prayed so earnestly to know the power of God, and why the truest and best of human souls have always repeated that prayer in many forms and in many languages, and why we ought to take it up and make it truly our own. It is because that power is our hope and our salvation. David was a strong man, but he knew that he could never conquer sin in his own strength. Paul was a strong man, but he knew that he was often unable to do the things that he would; he knew that he was not sufficient for these things; the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak; he felt that he was bound like a captive to a body of sin and death. And so they both longed and cried, so we should long and cry, to know something greater than

human strength, even the power of the mighty God unto salvation.

II. So we come to our second question: How may this spiritual power of God be known?

There is a twofold answer; and yet it is really one, for both parts of it belong together, and the latter supplements and completes the former, even as the sunrise is the fulfilment of the dawn.

The Psalmist says, "My soul thirsteth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, even as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." By this I think he means that the power of God may be known in the experiences of religion. Not only in his own soul, as he has confessed his sin and found pardon, as he has prayed for help and been strengthened, as he has asked for deliverance and been lifted out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, as he has implored guidance and been led in a plain path,—not only in his own soul, but also in the souls of his brother-men who have been delivered in the same perils, and helped in the same conflicts, and strengthened in the same sanctuary by humble faith and earnest prayer and true surrender to the Spirit of God, the Psalmist has seen the workings of Divine power, and so he longs to see them again.

The same vision is open to us. Every grace that God has given to us in the past, every touch

of his life that has quickened us, every assistance of his Spirit that has supported us and given us a victory over evil, is a proof and evidence of his power. Let us remember and trust.

Was it long ago, or was it but yesterday, that we came to him with that heavy weight of sin, and, asking for relief, found it? Come then, and, kneeling at his feet to-day, with a yet heavier load, it may be, prove the same almighty strength to deliver from sin. Was it long ago, or was it yesterday, that we felt that thrill of new life, of consecration, of devotion passing through us as we gave ourselves to God? Come then, and, renewing the gift to-day, feel again the same touch of power. Was it long ago, or was it but yesterday, that we prayed for strength to perform a certain duty, to bear a certain burden, to overcome a certain temptation, and received it? Do we dream that the Divine force was exhausted in answering that one prayer? No more than the great river is exhausted by turning the wheels of one mill. Put it to the proof again with to-day's duty, to-day's burden, to-day's temptation. Thrust yourself further and deeper into the stream of God's power, and feel it again, as you have felt it before, able to do exceeding abundantly. Remember and trust. "Thou hast been my

help: leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

But there are times when these memories of power experienced in the past grow faint and dim, times when it seems that all we can see behind us is a long succession of failures, and all we can feel now is a pervading sense of weakness. At such times it is good to consider the mighty things which God has wrought in and through other lives. He has lifted the hands that hung down, and strengthened the feeble knees. He has made the evil good; the sinful, pure; the selfish, generous; the base, noble. He has made apostles and saints out of men and women that the world would have thrown away as rubbish. The whole New Testament is just a record of that,—Peter, the weak and wayward; Mary Magdalen, the defiled; Zaccheus, the worldly; Thomas, the despondent; Paul, the persecutor and blasphemer. What God could do in the first century, he can do, he is doing, today.

What is it that we want? Is it faith to conquer doubt? There are men and women all around us believing in the face of difficulties greater than ours. Is it patience under trials? There are men and women all around us who are bearing trials as heavy as ours without

a murmur. Is it usefulness? Consider the mighty works that God has wrought through the hands of man. Think of the great influence of the thousands of Sunday-schools scattered all over the world. How did that begin? In the efforts of poor printer Robert Raikes to teach the ragged children of Gloucester. Think of the beautiful charity which carries vast multitudes of little ones every summer out of the crowded city into the fresh air of the country. How did that begin? In the attempt of a country minister to bring a score of poor children to spend a few days in the farmhouses of his scanty parish. What can we do? Nothing. What can God do with us? Anything; whatsoever he will.

But perhaps you will say, "This does not help me so much, after all. For these men and women are separated from me. I do not really know them, nor they me. There is no bond between us, nothing to make me partaker of their life. In fact, they are so far above me that it humiliates me even to think of them, and if they knew me there is no reason to think that they could do anything else than look down upon me in my selfishness, weakness, and sin."

To one who is in this state of mind I think Paul is more helpful than David, the New Testa-

ment more precious than the Old. Let us turn, then, to the way in which the apostle sought to know and feel the power of God. "That I may know him," he cried, that is Christ, "and the power of his resurrection." And in another place he said: "That ye may 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." That is the true proof and manifestation of the spiritual power of God; the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ, conqueror of sin and death.

Remember that it is a real human life, lived in the same flesh and blood, under the same conditions and limitations as ours, made human in order that it might be like ours. Remember that the strength of it is not physical but spiritual, the same Spirit of God dwelling in Jesus whom God promises to give to all that ask him. Remember that its triumph over falsehood and temptation and sin and death is one triumph, and that the resurrection is but the final working of the same power which worked all through the holy life of Jesus, so that he conquered the grave with the same might with which he overcame evil. Remember that this life is given to us and for us, so that we may belong to it, as

the branches belong to the vine, as the members belong to the body. Remember that Christ says: "Without me ye can do nothing, but lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also. Where I am, there shall ye be also." Remember these things, and we shall understand what Paul means by knowing the power of his resurrection. It is to know that the greatest spiritual power in the universe, the power which made Jesus Christ perfect in holiness, is ready to enter and work in us, and that he who raised up Jesus from the dead shall quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.

III. Now what practical effect will this knowledge of the mighty power of God have in our lives? David thinks chiefly of one effect; Paul chiefly of another.

The prominent thought in the psalm is the joy that comes from seeing God's power: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." And surely that is a good thing. Joy is essential to true religion. A gloomy religion is far from God. A sad gospel is a contradiction in terms, like a black sun. "Behold," said the angel, "I bring you good tidings of great

joy, which shall be to all people." And that message was simply the news of a great power which had appeared in the world for salvation. David, indeed, did not hear this message in its fulness, did not see this power in its perfection. But he heard the promise of it, he felt the thrill of its coming. His hope was in God. "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope." Yes, God is light, God is love, God is power; and therefore God is hope.

Little does he know of true joy who knows not this. Lightly, foolishly, falsely does he think of the great resistant force of evil, the tremendous difficulties of being good, the vast inertia of a world lying in sin, who exults in aught else than the knowledge of a Divine power able to overcome it all. When we look at the follies and vices and crimes and shames which still exist among men, when we see the immense obstacles which stand in the way of the spiritual progress of humanity, when we discern the dark and sullen and obstinate influences which are potent in our own hearts, despair for ourselves and for the world seems natural, pessimism right and inevitable. Will the slen-

der ray of light that shines on the mountain-top ever conquer the huge darkness?

Well, that depends on the source from which it springs. If it comes only from a fire kindled there by human hands, it will go out again when the fuel is exhausted. But if it comes from the sun, it will grow until the night is vanquished. And that is what the Bible tells us. Behind every manifestation of spiritual life there is the Spirit. Behind Christianity there is Christ. Behind Christ there is God. For he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and the power that works in him, the power that has raised him from the dead and set him at God's right hand in heavenly places, is the power that is saving every one that believeth, and reconciling the world to God. When we know that, despair ceases to exist, and joy fills the heart with music.

But in Paul's mind there is another thought. It is the thought of the strength, the vigour, the energy that come from this knowledge. "This one thing I do," he says: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And else-

where, again and again, he expresses the same thought. At the close of that glorious chapter on the resurrection, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, he says: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And again: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you." And again: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

That is the secret of strength; to know the Divine power and to use it. The man who does not use it cannot really know it.

The Christian who says, "I know the power of God, and I am trusting in that to save me and sustain me, and make me useful, and bring me to heaven," and yet makes no real effort to be good or to do good, is like a man sitting on the bank of a mighty river, and casting chips upon its sweeping tide, and saying, "This river is able to bear me to my journey's end." What you need to do is to push your boat out into the current, and feel its resistless force, and move onward with it. Then you will know the power that now you only know about.

VI

SALT *

"*Ye are the salt of the earth.*"—St. Matt. 5 : 13.

THIS figure of speech is plain and pungent. Salt is savory, purifying, preservative. From the very beginning of human history men have set a high value upon it and sought for it in caves and by the seashore. The nation that had a good supply of it was counted rich. A bag of salt, among the barbarous tribes, was worth more than a man. The Jews prized it especially because they lived in a warm climate where food was difficult to keep, and because their religion laid particular emphasis on cleanliness, and because salt was largely used in their sacrifices.

Christ chose an image which was familiar when he said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." This was his conception of their mission, their influence. They were to cleanse and sweeten the world in which they lived, to keep it from decay, to give a new and more wholesome flavour to human existence. Their

* Baccalaureate sermon, Harvard University, June, 1898.

character was not to be passive, but active. The sphere of its action was to be this present life. There is no use in saving salt for heaven. It will not be needed there. Its mission is to permeate, season, and purify things on earth.

Now, from one point of view, it was an immense compliment for the disciples to be spoken to in this way. Their Master showed great confidence in them. He set a high value upon them. The historian Livy could find nothing better to express his admiration for the people of ancient Greece than this very phrase. He called them *sal gentium*, "the salt of the nations."

But it was not from this point of view that Christ was speaking. He was not paying compliments. He was giving a clear and powerful call to duty. His thought was not that his disciples should congratulate themselves on being better than other men. He wished them to ask themselves whether they actually had in them the purpose and the power to make other men better. Did they intend to exercise a purifying, seasoning, saving influence in the world? Were they going to make their presence felt on earth and felt for good? If not, they would be failures and frauds. The savour would be out of them. They would be like

lumps of rock salt which has lain too long in a damp storehouse; good for nothing but to be thrown away and trodden under foot; worth less than common rock or common clay, because it would not even make good roads.

Men of privilege without power are waste material. Men of enlightenment without influence are the poorest kind of rubbish. Men of intellectual and moral and religious culture, who are not active forces for good in society, are not worth what it costs to produce and keep them. If they pass for Christians they are guilty of obtaining respect under false pretenses. They were meant to be the salt of the earth. And the first duty of salt is to be salty.

This is the subject on which I want to speak to you to-day. The saltiness of salt is the symbol of a noble, powerful, truly religious life.

You college students are men of privilege. It costs ten times as much, in labour and care and money, to bring you out where you are to-day as it costs to educate the average man, and a hundred times as much as it costs to raise a boy without any education. This fact brings you face to face with a question: Are you going to be worth your salt?

You have had mental training and plenty of instruction in various branches of learning.

You ought to be full of intelligence. You have had moral discipline, and the influences of good example have been steadily brought to bear upon you. You ought to be full of principle. You have had religious advantages and abundant inducements to choose the better part. You ought to be full of faith. What are you going to do with your intelligence, your principle, your faith? It is your duty to make active use of them for the seasoning, the cleansing, the saving of the world. Do not be sponges. Be the salt of the earth.

I. Think, first, of the influence for good which men of intelligence may exercise in the world if they will only put their culture to the right use. Half the troubles of mankind come from ignorance—ignorance which is systematically organized with societies for its support and newspapers for its dissemination—ignorance which consists less in not knowing things than in willfully ignoring the things that are already known. There are certain physical diseases which would go out of existence in ten years if people would only remember what has been learned. There are certain political and social plagues which are propagated only in the atmosphere of shallow self-confidence and vulgar thoughtlessness. There is a yellow fever

of literature specially adapted and prepared for the spread of shameless curiosity, incorrect information, and complacent idiocy among all classes of the population. Persons who fall under the influence of this pest become so triumphantly ignorant that they cannot distinguish between news and knowledge. They develop a morbid thirst for printed matter, and the more they read the less they learn. They are fit soil for the bacteria of folly and fanaticism.

Now the men of thought, of cultivation, of reason in the community ought to be an antidote to these dangerous influences. Having been instructed in the lessons of history and science and philosophy they are bound to contribute their knowledge to the service of society. As a rule they are willing enough to do this for pay, in the professions of law and medicine and teaching and divinity. What I plead for is the wider, nobler, unpaid service which an educated man renders to society simply by being thoughtful and by helping other men to think.

The college men of a country ought to be its most conservative men; that is to say, the men who do most to conserve it. They ought to be the men whom demagogues cannot inflame nor political bosses pervert. They ought

to bring wild theories to the test of reason, and withstand rash experiments with obstinate prudence. Perpetual thoughtfulness is the price of social safety.

But it is not ignorance alone that works harm in the body of society. Passion is equally dangerous. Take, for instance, a time when war is imminent. How easily and how wildly the passions of men are roused by the mere talk of fighting! How ready they are to plunge into a fierce conflict for an unknown motive, for a base motive, or for no motive at all! Educated men should be the steadiest opponents of war while it is avoidable. But when it becomes inevitable, save at cost of a failure in duty and a loss of honour, then they should be the most vigorous advocates of carrying it to a swift, triumphant, and noble end. No man ought to be too much educated to love his country and, if need be, to die for it. The culture which leaves a man without a flag is only one degree less miserable than that which leaves him without a God. To be empty of enthusiasms and overflowing with criticisms is not a sign of cultivation, but of enervation. The best learning is that which intensifies a man's patriotism as well as clarifies it. The finest education is that which puts a man in

closest touch with his fellow-men. The true intelligence is that which acts, not as cayenne pepper to sting the world, but as salt to cleanse and conserve it.

II. Think, in the second place, of the duty which men of moral principle owe to society in regard to the evils which corrupt and degrade it. Of the existence of these evils we need to be reminded again and again, just because we are comparatively clean and decent and upright people. Men who live an orderly life are in great danger of doing nothing else. We wrap our virtue up in little bags of respectability and keep it in the storehouse of a safe reputation. But if it is genuine virtue it is worthy of a better use than that. It is fit, nay it is designed and demanded, to be used as salt, for the purifying of human life.

There are multitudes of our fellow-men whose existence is dark, confused, and bitter. Some of them are groaning under the burden of want; partly because of their own idleness or incapacity, no doubt, but partly also because of the rapacity, greed, and injustice of other men. Some of them are tortured in bondage to vice; partly by their own false choice, no doubt, but partly also for want of guidance and good counsel and human sympathy. Every great city

contains centers of moral decay which an honest man cannot think of without horror, pity, and dread. The trouble is that many honest folk dislike these emotions so much that they shut their eyes and walk through the world with their heads in the air, breathing a little atmosphere of their own, and congratulating themselves that the world goes very well now. But is it well that the things which eat the heart out of manhood and womanhood should go on in all our great towns?

"Is it well that while we range with science, glorying in the time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

"There, among the glooming alleys, progress halts on palsied feet;
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

"There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest, in the warrens of the poor."

Even in what we call respectable society, forces of corruption are at work. Are there no unrighteous practices in business, no false standards in social life, no licensed frauds and falsehoods in politics, no vile and vulgar tendencies in art and literature and journalism, in this

sunny and self-complacent modern world of which we are a part? All these things are signs of decay. The question for us as men of salt is: What are we going to do to arrest and counteract these tendencies? It is not enough for us to take a negative position in regard to them. If our influence is to be real, it must be positive. It is not enough to say "Touch not the unclean thing." On the contrary, we must touch it, as salt touches decay to check and overcome it. Good men are not meant to be simply like trees planted by rivers of water, flourishing in their own pride and for their own sake. They ought to be like the eucalyptus trees which have been set out in the marshes of the Campagna, from which a healthful, tonic influence is said to be diffused to countervail the malaria. They ought to be like the tree of paradise, "whose leaves are for the healing of nations."

Where good men are in business, lying and cheating and gambling should be more difficult, truth and candour and fair dealing should be easier and more popular, just because of their presence. Where good men are in society, grossness of thought and speech ought to stand rebuked, high ideals and courtliness and chivalrous actions and "the desire of fame and all that makes a man," ought to seem at once more

desirable and more attainable to every one who comes into contact with them.

There have been men of this quality in the world. It is recorded of Bernardino of Siena, that when he came into the room, his gentleness and purity were so evident that all that was base and silly in the talk of his companions was abashed and fell into silence. Artists like Fra Angelico have made their pictures like prayers. Warriors like the Chevalier Bayard and Sir Philip Sidney and Henry Havelock and Chinese Gordon have dwelt amid camps and conflicts as Knights of the Holy Ghost. Philosophers like John Locke and George Berkeley, men of science like Newton and Herschel, poets like Wordsworth and Tennyson and Browning, have taught virtue by their lives as well as wisdom by their works. Humanitarians like Howard and Wilberforce and Raikes and Charles Brace have given themselves to noble causes. Every man who will has it in his power to make his life count for something positive in the redemption of society. And this is what every man of moral principle is bound to do if he wants to belong to the salt of the earth.

There is a loftier ambition than merely to stand high in the world. It is to stoop down and lift mankind a little higher. There is a

nobler character than that which is merely incorruptible. It is the character which acts as an antidote and preventive of corruption. Fearlessly to speak the words which bear witness to righteousness and truth and purity; patiently to do the deeds which strengthen virtue and kindle hope in your fellow-men; generously to lend a hand to those who are trying to climb upward; faithfully to give your support and your personal help to the efforts which are making to elevate and purify the social life of the world—that is what it means to have salt in your character. And that is the way to make your life interesting and savoury and powerful. The men that have been happiest, and the men that are best remembered, are the men that have done good.

What the world needs to-day is not a new system of ethics. It is simply a larger number of people who will make a steady effort to live up to the system that they have already. There is plenty of room for heroism in the plainest kind of duty. The greatest of all wars has been going on for centuries. It is the ceaseless, glorious conflict against the evil that is in the world. Every warrior who will enter that age-long battle may find a place in the army, and win his spurs, and achieve honour, and obtain favour with the great Captain of the Host, if he will

but do his best to make life purer and finer for every one that lives.

It is one of the burning questions of to-day whether university life and training really fit men for taking their share in this supreme conflict. There is no abstract answer; but every college class that graduates is a part of the concrete answer. Therein lies your responsibility, gentlemen. It lies with you to illustrate the meanness of an education which produces learned shirks and refined skulkers; or to illuminate the perfection of unselfish culture with the light of devotion to humanity. It lies with you to confess that you have not been strong enough to assimilate your privileges; or to prove that you are able to use all that you have learned for the end for which it was intended. I believe the difference in the results depends very much less upon the educational system than it does upon the personal quality of the teachers and the men. Richard Porson was a university man, and he seemed to live chiefly to drink port and read Greek. Thomas Guthrie was a university man, and he proved that he meant what he said in his earnest verse:—

"I live for those who love me,
For those who know me true,
For the heaven that bends above me,

And the good that I can do;
For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that I can do."

III. It remains only to speak briefly, in the third place, of the part which religion ought to play in the purifying, preserving, and sweetening of society. Hitherto I have spoken to you simply as men of intelligence and men of principle. But the loftiest reach of reason and the strongest inspiration of morality is religious faith. I know there are some thoughtful men, upright men, unselfish and useful men, who say that they have no such faith. But they are very few. And the reason of their rarity is because it is immensely difficult to be unselfish and useful and thoughtful, without faith in God, and in the divine law, and in the gospel of salvation, and in the future life. I trust that none of you are going to try that experiment. I trust that all of you have religion to guide and sustain you in life's hard and perilous adventure. If you have, I beg you to make sure that it is the right kind of religion. The name makes little difference. The outward form makes little difference. The test of its reality is its power to cleanse life and make it worth living; to

save the things that are most precious in our existence from corruption and decay; to lend a new luster to our ideals and to feed our hopes with inextinguishable light; to produce characters which shall fulfill Christ's word and be the salt of the earth.

Religion is something which a man cannot invent for himself, nor keep to himself. If it does not show in his conduct it does not exist in his heart. If he has just barely enough of it to save himself alone, it is doubtful whether he has even enough for that. Religion ought to bring out and intensify the flavour of all that is best in manhood, and make it fit, to use Wordsworth's noble phrase—

"*For human nature's daily food.*"

Good citizens, honest workmen, cheerful comrades, true friends, gentle men—that is what the product of religion should be. And the power that produces such men is the great antiseptic of society, to preserve it from decay.

Decay begins in discord. It is the loss of balance in an organism. One part of the system gets too much nourishment, another part too little. Morbid processes are established. Tissues break down. In their débris all sorts of malignant growths take root. Ruin follows.

Now this is precisely the danger to which the social organism is exposed. From this danger religion is meant to preserve us. Certainly there can be no true Christianity which does not aim at this result. It should be a balancing, compensating, regulating power. It should keep the relations between man and man, between class and class, normal and healthful and mutually beneficent. It should humble the pride of the rich, and moderate the envy of the poor. It should soften and ameliorate the unavoidable inequalities of life, and transform them from causes of jealous hatred into opportunities of loving and generous service. If it fails to do this it is salt without savour, and when a social revolution comes, as the consequence of social corruption, men will cast out the unsalted religion and tread it under foot.

Was not this what happened in the French Revolution? What did men care for the religion that had failed to curb sensuality and pride and cruelty under the oppression of the old régime, the religion that had forgotten to deal bread to the hungry, to comfort the afflicted, to break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free? What did they care for the religion that had done little or nothing to make men understand and love and help one another?

Nothing. It was the first thing that they threw away in the madness of their revolt and trampled in the mire of their contempt.

But was the world much better off without that false kind of religion than with it? Did the revolution really accomplish anything for the purification and preservation of society? No, it only turned things upside down, and brought the elements that had been at the bottom to the top. It did not really change the elements, or sweeten life, or arrest the processes of decay. The only thing that can do this is the true kind of religion, which brings men closer to one another by bringing them all nearer to God.

Some people say that another revolution is coming in our own age and our own country. It is possible. There are signs of it. There has been a tremendous increase of luxury among the rich in the present generation. There has been a great increase of suffering among the poor in certain sections of our country. It was a startling fact that nearly six millions of people in 1896 cast a vote of practical discontent with the present social and commercial order. It may be that we are on the eve of a great overturning. I do not know. I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet. But I know that

there is one thing that can make a revolution needless, one thing that is infinitely better than any revolution; and that is a real revival of religion—the religion that has already founded the hospital and the asylum and the free school, the religion that has broken the fetters of the slave and lifted womanhood out of bondage and degradation, and put the arm of its protection around the helplessness and innocence of childhood, the religion that proves its faith by its works, and links the preaching of the fatherhood of God to the practice of the brotherhood of man. That religion is true Christianity, with plenty of salt in it which has not lost its savour.

I believe that we are even now in the beginning of a renaissance of such religion. I believe that there is a rising tide of desire to find the true meaning of Christ's teaching, to feel the true power of Christ's life, to interpret the true significance of Christ's sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. I believe that never before were there so many young men of culture, of intelligence, of character, passionately in earnest to find the way of making their religion speak, not in word only, but in power. I call you today, my brethren, to take your part, not with the idle, the frivolous, the faithless, the selfish, the gilded youth, but with the earnest, the

manly, the devout, the devoted, the golden youth. I summon you to do your share in the renaissance of religion for your own sake, for your fellow-men's sake, for your country's sake. On this fair Sunday, when all around us tells of bright hope and glorious promise, let the vision of our country, with her perils, with her opportunities, with her temptations, with her splendid powers, with her threatening sins, rise before our souls. What needs she more, in this hour, than the cleansing, saving, conserving influence of right religion? What better service could we render her than to set our lives to the tune of these words of Christ, and be indeed the salt of our country, and, through her growing power, of the whole earth? Ah, bright will be the day, and full of glory, when the bells of every church, of every schoolhouse, of every college, of every university, ring with the music of this message, and find their echo in the hearts of the youth of America. That will be the chime of a new age.

"Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be."

VII

THE OPEN DOOR *

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."—John 10:9.

CHRIST taught by pictures as well as by parables. He came into the world to be the Saviour of men. What that meant in all its fullness could not be put into any doctrine, any theory, any description. So Christ looked around him in the world of life, and whatever he saw that was beautiful and useful and precious he claimed and used as a picture of himself.

It seems as if he were always saying to men, "You do not know what my coming to you really means. You think that I have come merely to teach you something or perhaps to do something for you. No: I have come to be something in your life. All that is best and most needful and most glorious is but a type and symbol of what I am. I am the bread of

* Moderator's sermon at the One Hundred and Fourteenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., New York, May 18, 1902.

heaven, I am the water of life, I am the light of the world, I am the true vine, I am the good shepherd, I am the lamb of God, I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Among these "I ams" of Christ, the picture in the text, "I am the door," seems at first lowly and commonplace, not worthy to be compared with the other images which our Lord uses to reveal himself. A door is an ordinary affair, made by man, for an everyday purpose. We pass through a hundred doors daily without noticing them. But think for a moment what the door means; what is its real significance in life?

The door is the way of entrance into any building or structure. It signifies, therefore, the right of admission to all that the building stands for. The open door says "Come in." In the home, the door means access to the inner circle of love and joy and peace. In the fortress, the door means escape from danger, entrance into safety and security. In the temple the door means the right of approach to the mercy-seat of God, the privilege of communion with those who worship and serve him. Thus in all ancient religions the doorway was regarded as a sacred place. The threshold of the house was the primitive altar, and the "threshold-

covenant" was one of the earliest forms of religion.

But the door is not only the way of entrance. It is also the way of egress. It leads in and it leads out. It is the symbol of liberty as well as the symbol of peace. A door through which you can pass only in one direction is not a door: it is a trap. The dwellers in a human home use the door not only to enter into their place of rest but also to go out to their places of work. The door of the fortress would not fulfill its purpose if it only let the garrison in; it must also swing free to let the soldiers forth to battle and conquest. The temple doors invite the worshipers to praise God in the sanctuary; but they also remind us of the duty and privilege of going out from the holy place to serve God in the world.

Inward and outward—both ways the true door invites us. Protection and freedom; safety and struggle; worship and work; life enfolded in peace, and life enlarged in power—this is the twofold significance of the door. And this is what Christ means when he says to us, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

How true it is; and yet how often we forget

it, how little we understand its full and glorious meaning! Christ is the way into peace. By him we have access to the Father, forgiveness for our sins, reconciliation with God, deliverance from evil, security from death, comfort and rest, and the promise of everlasting life—how blessed is the entrance into these things through the grace of Jesus Christ! It is like coming up from the wilderness where tempests rage and wild beasts are lurking and robbers seek their prey, at the close of day, when the shades of night are falling, and finding the door of the sheepfold open, and passing in to security and peace. Nothing can surpass the sweet repose of the heart when it takes refuge in Christ.

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the billows near me roll,
While the tempest still is high."

Nothing can ever change that message. Nothing can ever take its place.

But this refuge, this restfulness, is not the whole of salvation. To be truly saved, thoroughly saved, means something more than coming into security and peace. It means also going out to a richer, fuller life, a broader, deeper usefulness, a larger joy of noble work.

Full salvation is active as well as passive. It includes deliverance from danger and consecration to duty. It ransoms the soul from sin in order to set it free for service. The soul that is saved, goes in to God and out to life; and everywhere, inward and outward, it finds through Christ what it needs—protection to safeguard it, rest to refresh it, pasture to strengthen it, work to discipline and unfold it. "I am come," says Christ, "not only that they might not die, but that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Christ's two commands are "Come" and "Go"—invitation and liberation. As Phillips Brooks interprets it: discipleship, which sits at his feet to learn, and apostleship, which goes out into the world to work.

"Come and see," he says to Andrew and Philip and Nathaniel, come and see, that you may believe in me. And then "Go and tell John what things you have seen and heard," that my grace may be known through you to all men.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And then "Go work to-day in my vineyard. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations."

Let me speak for a few moments of Christ

as the living door through whom those who have entered into peace with God go out to a larger, freer, nobler life.

I. Through Christ our thoughts go out into liberty.

It is common to speak of the unbelief which rejects Christ and his teaching, and of the attempt to solve the mystery of life without religion, as "free thought." No name could be more false and misleading. The thought which refuses to go beyond the evidence of the senses; the thought which has no explanation for our deepest affections, our most ardent longings, our loftiest aspirations, except to say that they are dreams and illusions; the thought which has nothing to say about the origin of our spiritual nature and no answer to give to our burning questions about the eternal future; the thought which knows no more of God

> "*than sheep or goats,*
> *That nourish a blind life within the brain,*"

is not free thought. It is captive thought, enslaved thought, imprisoned thought. Christ opens a door in the blank wall with which unbelief would shut us in. He tells us that he comes from the spiritual world, and that he returns thither. He has seen it; he is sure of

its reality; he testifies of that which he has seen and speaks of that which he knows. He bids us trust our spiritual instincts even more than we trust our senses. He assures us that the hunger and thirst after righteousness is a prophecy that the soul shall be filled, that purity of heart is a pledge that we shall see God. He does not give us a definition of God. Definitions are limitations. He gives us a vision of God. Vision is liberation. "Look out through me," he says to us, "and you shall see the Father. For the Father is in me, and I in him. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

What is it that we see in Christ? Holiness, and justice, and truth, and mercy, and kindness, and pity, and wisdom, and love. Through that door our thoughts go out to seek after God, not blindly, but with a Divine guidance. All that is holy, all that is true, all that is good, all that is spiritually lovely, belongs to God. It is but the broken image and reflection of the perfect light of his countenance revealed in Jesus Christ. Every gleam of glory that flashes upon our souls as we wander freely through the world of thought, like every ray of light that we see upon the breast of the moving waters beneath the stars, is an evidence and interpretation of the eternal light, which is God.

Take, for example, that one word in which Christ teaches us all to call God "our Father." No dark prison of doubt can confine us, no forbidding walls of austere doctrine can shut us in, while we have that door by which our souls may go out. Who can question a father's wisdom? Who can fathom a father's love? Who can exhaust the resources of a father's tenderness and care?

What does fatherhood mean? I speak out the experience of an earthly fatherhood that has blessed my whole life. It means tenderness, forbearance, watchfulness, firmness to counsel and rebuke, pity for my worst, sympathy for my best, a golden friendship, an undying love. If earthly fatherhood means all that, how much more does heavenly fatherhood mean!

We come to Christ with our doubts and questions and perplexities. He tells us that the great God, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, is our Father. Our questions are not all answered, but our way is open. Doubts may still shadow our path, but they cannot stay our steps. They are no longer a wall, but a mist, through which we press onward towards the light.

Christ is the door of our faith. There is no

advance in religious knowledge except through him. There is no revision of creeds save that to which he leads. Without him there may be change. But the only possible improvement is to tune the music of our faith more closely to the keynote of his name. Every forward movement must be through Christ.

His word is our chart, his spirit is our guide, his person is our star. Our motto is, "*Not a new gospel, but more gospel.*" Advance in theology through Christ, means the outgoing of the soul into life with God, with new experiences, new wonders, new glories unfolding every day. Beloved, now we know in part. But we know. And the door that opens before us into a wider, richer, truer knowledge of God, is Jesus Christ, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person.

II. Through Christ our affections and sympathies go out into liberty.

The love of Christ is the type of all true and noble love because it does not narrow the heart, but expands it and makes it overflow with generous feelings. Contrast him with the Scribes and Pharisees. Their doctrine was "Love thyself well, and give what is left over to those who will pay for it." Christ's doctrine is "Love thy neighbour as thyself, and give freely because thou hast freely received."

He would have us love him first and most, because he is our Saviour, because he has given himself to us and for us. But he would have us love every one else better, because we love him best.

Nothing in the world can so enlarge the heart and set its sympathies free to go out to all men as a true knowledge of Christ and a true devotion to him. When we enter through him into the secret of what real love means—when we learn from him that it is not getting but giving, and that the heart finds its deepest joy in bestowing happiness upon others, then the door is open and we may go out and find pasture.

Think how Christ lived in the world. How closely he was in touch with all sorts and conditions of men. How he understood the little children and rejoiced in their confidence. How he took part in all human joys and sorrows, from the wedding feast to the funeral. How he entered into the trials and conflicts, the perplexities and aspirations, the weariness and the hope, of human nature everywhere. Whose thoughts did he not read? Whose wishes did he not fathom? Whose real needs did he not minister unto?

He draws each one of us in by sympathy with us, in order that our hearts may go out in sympathy with him. Through the lips of

that disciple whom he loved he says to us, "Love not the world"—the sensuous perishing order of existence which is separate from God —"neither the things that are in the world." But the *people* that are in the world—the suffering, struggling souls, enslaved by its evil, deceived by its follies, starved by its famine; all sorts of people that are weary and heavy laden; all sorts of people that are climbing upward and lending a hand to others; all sorts of people that need God's love and ours, Jesus would have us love, even as he loves us.

Faith in Christ rewrites the old motto. Not "Liberty, equality, fraternity." But first, fraternity, which lifts men into equality and so fits them for liberty. Faith in Christ makes us acknowledge brotherhood with all who are trying to cast out devils and heal the sick, whether they follow with us or not. Faith in Christ says, "He that is not against us is for us."

I have no confidence in that kind of Christianity which will not join hands with an honest Hebrew to relieve suffering and enlighten ignorance. I have no confidence in that kind of Protestantism which refuses to take hold of one end of the litter in which a wounded man is lying because a Roman Catholic has hold

of the other end. I have no confidence in that kind of Presbyterianism which lives in hostility and hatred toward Christians who have other creeds and forms of worship. I have no confidence in that kind of a church which resembles a private religious club, caring only for the comfort and respectability of its members, unreasonably sure of its own salvation and unreasonably indifferent to the salvation of the world.

I believe in that Presbyterianism which is evangelical and evangelistic, which loves the old gospel so much that it cannot keep it to itself, and which has no rivalry with any other church except to try who can do the most good in the world. I believe in a church which goes out, through Christ and with Christ, to seek and to save the lost. I believe in a Christianity which is a giving, forgiving, sympathizing, sacrificing, self-forgetting, and happy life of ministry to the souls of others. And I believe that the perfection and everlasting continuance of that life is the joy of heaven.

"Rejoice, we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive;
A spark disturbs our clod—
Nearer we held of God
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must believe."

III. Through Christ our best activities, our noblest powers of effort and achievement, go out into liberty.

Let us admit frankly that the Christian life has its restrictions, its limitations, its constraints. It does cut a man off from some things which attract and tempt him. It does interpose a barrier between the heart and some of its desires. It involves sacrifice, resignation, giving up. There is a sense in which the acceptance of Christ means the withdrawal from the old sphere of life, the entrance into a new and hidden sphere, the seclusion and separation of the soul.

But think for a moment on which side of our nature it cuts us off. Is it not the lower side, the baser side, the perishing side? What are the things that must be given up? What are the activities from which it withdraws us? Selfish ambition, sensual lust, frivolous dissipation, heartless conflict with our fellow-men, hopeless pursuit of empty pleasures, weary service of insatiable passions. These are activities, it is true, but they are activities of death, not of life. To be cut off from them is to be set free from them. It is not to enter a narrower life: it is to come in through Christ to a deeper, truer, quieter, happier life.

Tell me one thing that you would have to resign if you accepted Christ, and I will tell you that without that thing you would be far purer, stronger, happier, better fitted to live than you are to-day. If you give it up, if you leave it behind you and enter into salvation through Christ the door, you will find that same door open before you to activities that are unspeakably nobler, pleasures that are infinitely more satisfying, and rewards that are immeasurably richer.

For this is what Christ does for the man who comes in through him. He gives that man a new hope, a new inspiration, a new motive and power of effort, a new force of love and courage in all his faculties, and then sends him out again into the world to live and to work with all his energies.

What good thing is there that Christ will not let you do if you take him as your master? Nay, what good thing is there that he does not want you to do, and to do it better, more earnestly, more thoroughly, for his sake?

I am not speaking vaguely. I am talking to men and women whose lives, whose duties, whose perils, whose tasks, whose opportunities, here in this great city, I know. I say to you that whatever your real life and whatever your

right work may be, you will live it better, you will do it more honestly and more thoroughly, if you go out to it through the door which is opened to you by Jesus of Nazareth.

Christ came into the world to sanctify all forms of honest human toil and all tasks of vital human effort. Christ came into the world not to separate men from life, but to bring true happiness into life. Christ came into the world to consecrate humanity to a holy priesthood, serving God in the ritual of the common life. The activities that mar and weaken and destroy humanity, he would check and crush out. The activities that develop true manhood and womanhood and make the world a better place to live in, he would encourage and enlarge. He came to break down the false distinction between the sacred and the secular. There is no clean and honest work in this world which may not be done in Christ's name, and done a little better because the workman calls Jesus his Master.

"*Every mason in the quarry, every builder on the shore,*
Every woodsman in the forest, every boatman at the oar,

Hewing wood and drawing water, splitting stones and cleaving sod,
All the dusty ranks of labour in the regiment of God,

March together toward his triumph, do the task his hands prepare;
Honest toil is holy service, faithful work is praise and prayer."

But more than this—he calls each one of us to go out through him to a new and wonderful task. It is the task of transforming the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our God and of his Christ; the task of drawing the world back from darkness and sin and sorrow to the love of the heavenly Father.

This is the great object for which the Church exists. She is to bear witness to the truth, but it must always be an evangelistic witness, a missionary witness. The first article in her commission is not to define, nor to organize, nor to build, nor to devise liturgies, but to preach the gospel to every creature. And this work must begin at home, in our own country, in order that it may overflow to every country in the world. A free church in a free state is the finest result of noble and enlightened politics. A preaching church in a listening land is the best product of religious freedom. A whole country won for Christ is the greatest service that can crown the labours of a loyal and believing church.

The Master calls us, my brethren, to go out,

through him, to this glorious task. Every one of us, young and old, learned and unlearned, laymen and clergymen, women and children—every one of us may have a share in the work. There is something for every one to do.

By the wayside, in a country where I often go to rest in the summer, there is a small, cool, crystal spring; and by the spring there is a little cup, hanging on the broken branch of a tree; and that silent cup says clearly that the water flows for every one who is thirsty and will stoop down to drink. By the spring of the water of everlasting life there is also a cup which tells the same story. But it is not for you alone. Not far away there is sure to be a little child waiting for you to give the cup of cold water in the Master's name.

There is a place in Christ's army for every soul that belongs to him, and a spot on the battlefield where each soldier is needed.

In a certain battle, not long ago, the officer of a battalion arrived late. Dashing up to his chief, he asked where he should lead his troops. "Go where you please," was the answer, "there is good fighting all along the line."

Yes, there is good fighting all along the line for Christ! In heathen lands and in our own land; in the university and in the market-place;

in society and on the frontier; in the home and in the mission school—all along the line thousands of places where loyal soldiers can do glorious service for Christ and their fellowmen. But you must go out to do it.

You must not shut yourself up in your religion as if it were a prison. You must issue forth from it as the home in which you have found peace for your heart, and strength for your work, and inspiration for your duty. Christ must be your door, by whom you go in to God and out to man.

Come in, then, my friend, whose sins are unforgiven, whose soul is unsatisfied, whose heart is heavy laden—come in, through Jesus, to pardon, peace, and rest.

Go out, then, my friend, whose faith is still unproved by works, whose nature is still undeveloped by service, whose life is still narrowed and imprisoned by self, go out, through Christ, to a broader, nobler, happier life than you have ever lived before:—

"The freer step, the fuller breath,
The wide horizon's grander view,
The sense of life that knows no death,
The life that maketh all things new."

VIII

RESURRECTION NOW *

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."—Col. 3 : 1.

RESURRECTION is a great word. It has a power to stir the mind, a charm to quicken the imagination, and an attraction to draw the heart. What thoughtful person can repeat that sentence of the Creed which says of Christ, "the third day He rose again from the dead," and then add that triumphant utterance of death-defying faith, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," without a great thrill of hope and joy?

But these two thoughts of resurrection do not exhaust its meaning. It is more than a sublime fact in the past. It is more than a glorious event in the future. It is an experience in the present. It is happening to-day. At this very moment a new and eternal life is unfolding within human souls and transforming human bodies in fellowship with Christ. At this very moment men and women are

* Baccalaureate sermon, University of Missouri, June 1, 1902.

passing from death unto life, from darkness to light, from the perishing to the imperishable, by vital union with the spirit of Jesus.

Here, then, is the great thought which the text flashes into our souls. There is a Resurrection Now. There is a triumph over death for which we do not need to wait until the graves are opened. We may have it at once. There is a victory of life for which we do not need to look to some far-distant morning. We may feel it to-day. St. Paul felt it as he sat in his Roman prison, writing to his friends at Colossæ. Worn, and feeble, and aged before his time, bound with chains, waiting for his trial before a cruel and bloody Cæsar, St. Paul knew even then that he was a risen man. By faith in the things that are unseen and eternal he had already won the victory over the world. In prison he was free, in weakness he was strong, in chains he was cheerful, in exile he was exultant, in trouble he triumphed, and in the drear winter of old age his spirit was quickened with an immortal spring. Surely this is a veritable resurrection, and they who have entered into such an experience are risen indeed.

But this risen life is under a law. Like all other forms of life it has a condition which must be fulfilled in order that the life may continue

to exist and expand. It is of this law of the risen life, it is of this condition under which alone Resurrection Now can become a real and abiding experience within us, that I wish to speak to you.

The subject is important. If we can learn even now the secret of rising from the dead, there is no other knowledge worthy to be compared with this. And surely the subject is appropriate. It is the season when nature has put on a new life. All round us the visible emblems of vitality are unfolding. The old earth, after her long sleep in winter's lap, stirs at the touch of summer, stretches her arms, smiles like a child waking at sunrise, and laughs with a thousand melodies of joy. How beautiful it all is! How deeply it speaks to our longing hearts! It is the time of unfolding life in your experience also. You are in the flood-tide of summer, my friends, and the time for the singing of birds has come. Youth means liberation, enlargement, unfolding. To some of you this Commencement season brings a new period of existence, as you step across the threshold of the university into the larger school of the world. To all of you I trust it brings new thoughts, new hopes, new purposes, new ideas of what it means to live. It is a privilege to speak to you,

and I should be glad indeed if I could make that privilege a power. A power it would be if your hearts would but receive this day, and keep for ever, the Law of Resurrection Now.

"*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*"

What does it mean to seek those things that are above? Where is it that Christ sitteth on the right hand of God? Surely not in some distant region, invisible and inaccessible to mortals. To read the law of the risen life thus would be to rob it of its meaning and its power for the present moment. God is not secluded in some far-off heaven. He is dwelling and working in this very world where we live. His "right hand" is manifest in all his works of wisdom and righteousness and goodness and love. Christ sitteth on the right hand of his Father because he is exalted to share in all these glorious works, because he is the Mediator between the divine and the human, because his spirit brings men into harmony with God and inspires the pure and holy thoughts, the just and noble deeds, the generous and blessed affections that lift the world. He is not far away from us. He is with us always, even unto the end of the world. He sitteth close beside us,

breaketh bread at our tables, walketh with us in the city streets and among the green fields and beside the sea. The "things that are above" are the things that belong to him and to his kingdom, the spiritual realities of a noble life, whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report. These are the things that we are to seek. We are to distinguish between the perishing and the imperishable. We are to choose in every action between the higher and the lower end. We are to cling to that which is fine and generous and true, and cut loose from that which is coarse and selfish and false. We are to turn away from that which drags us downward and makes us like the beasts, and follow after that which draws us upward towards the likeness of Christ. That is the law of Resurrection Now. Those who have risen must be ever rising. The resurrection life must be an upward life.

Let us try to carry this law into some of the different spheres of our existence. Let us try to see how the things that are above mingle with the things that are beneath all through the world, and how our present life, by lofty choice, and by fellowship with Jesus, may be made a daily resurrection and ascension.

I. Look first at the aspects of the natural

world in which we live. Are there not two sides here—a lower side and a higher—one which ministers to sense alone and another which ministers to spirit? The procession of the seasons, the secret forces of chemistry and physics and biology, are working together for the supply of our bodily needs. They warm and feed and clothe us. But if we look only at this side of nature, if we regard this wonderful world only as our dormitory, our wardrobe, our feeding-trough, we are receiving from it only the least and lowest of its gifts. It has a nobler service to render to our souls, a revelation of wisdom and beauty, a message of joy and peace, a gift of spiritual instruction and comfort. Wordsworth was right when he said:—

> "*One impulse from a vernal wood*
> *May teach you more of man,*
> *Of moral evil, and of good,*
> *Than all the sages can.*"

When we look only at the sensuous side we may read nature as a grocer's account book, but when we look at the spiritual side we begin to interpret nature as a divine poem. There are some people in the world, and very decent people too, to whom the returning summer cannot mean much more than it means to a

comfortable cow—a time of physical pleasure, when there are no more blizzards, and it is easy to move about, and there are plenty of green things to eat. But there are others to whom it means a blossoming of thankful thoughts, a rapture of gentle affections, a promise of new and immortal life. I once heard an Englishman, looking down upon the glittering, motionless billows of the Mer de Glace, remark that "all that ice would bring a lot of money in the hot season at Calcutta—don't you know?" The poet Coleridge, in his *Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni*, hears those silent cataracts of frozen splendour singing the eternal praise of God. It is always open to us to choose, my friends, whether we will fix our regards upon the lower or upon the higher side of nature. We have two pairs of eyes, one of the sense and one of the soul. The spiritual vision seeks the things that are above. To look up is to aspire. To aspire is to rise.

"The beauty to perceive of earthly things,
The mounting soul must heavenward prune her wings."

II. In the sphere of human intercourse we find the same division between the higher and the lower. There are two paths in love and friendship. One leads downward, with pride

and folly, selfishness and lust as guides, towards the earthly, the sensual, and at last the devilish. The other leads upward, with purity and honour, generosity and self-sacrifice as guides, towards the celestial, the ideal, the godlike. Love is a fire; sometimes it kindles a harbour light to guide the heart to peace; sometimes it kindles a false beacon to lure the heart to wreck. There is a friendship which saves, and there is a friendship which ruins.

What are you seeking in human intercourse? That is the crucial question. It is said that a man may be known by the company he keeps. Not always. He may be better known by the purpose with which he keeps it. The Pharisees kept company with respectable folk, and found dead men's bones. Christ kept company with publicans and sinners, and found hidden treasure.

If you are seeking in your fellow-men that which ministers to ambition or avarice or sensuality, if you are trying to make friends simply in order that they may help you to secure certain advantages in the world of wealth or fashion, if you are forming ties of intimacy whose chief attraction lies in their appeal to that which is selfish and greedy and base in your nature, then you are surely on the de-

scending path. But if you are looking for that which is best in the men and women with whom you come into contact; if you are seeking also to give them that which is best in yourself; if you are looking for a friendship which shall help you to know yourself as you are and to fulfill yourself as you ought to be; if you are looking for a love which shall not be a flattering dream and a madness of desire, but a true comradeship and a mutual inspiration to all nobility of living, then you are surely on the ascending path.

Men tell you that you must "know the world." Yes, it is true, unless you are to be helpless babies all your lives, you must acquire some of this knowledge. But never suppose that it consists only or chiefly of a knowledge of evil. The world is not a pesthouse, nor is life a complication of diseases. The true physiology is a science of health. The deepest knowledge of human nature has for its guiding light the desire to discover that which is best in humanity. Study vices less and virtues more. Make your contribution to society as a believer in pure womanhood and worthy manhood, as an encourager of faith and hope and charity, as a leader and helper in the upward path, as a friend of true friendship, and a lover of noble

love. Do not waste your life in analyzing the pollutions of the social atmosphere, but bring into it the breath of a purer spirit.

"Be a breeze from the mountain height;
Be a fountain of pure delight;
Be a star serene,
Shining clear and keen
Through the darkness and dread of the night;
Be something holy and helpful and bright,—
Be the best that you can with all your might."

III. When we turn to the region of art and literature do we not find two paths here also? There is noble music which cleanses the heart like a tide from the sea, sweeping away all things that are low and base, filling it with high thoughts and generous desires. There is mean music that plays upon the strings of sensual passion and vulgar mirth, strumming and tinkling a fit accompaniment to the reckless dance of ephemeral souls above the cataract of fatal folly, or beating a brutal march for the parade of pride and cruelty towards the pit of death. There are pictures that immortalize the great moments of history, the fine aspirations of humanity, the fair scenes of nature. There are pictures that lavish all the resources of the most consummate art to perpetuate the trivial and the vile. There are dramas that speak of

heroism and virtue, and purify our hearts with pity, fear, and love. There are plays that present life as a coarse and tedious farce, or glorify indecency and unfaithfulness, or make a bitter jest of the impotence of all goodness and the tragic failure of all high aims. There are books which store the memory with beautiful images and gentle pleasures and fine ideals. There are books which leave a bad taste in the mind, and weaken every fiber of spiritual courage, and poison the springs of imagination at the fountain-head. It is for us to choose in which of these two paths of art we will walk. It is for us to choose whether we will have for our companions the poets like Shakespeare and Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson, who reveal human nature in the light of duty and courage and hope, or the writers like Byron and Swinburne, Baudelaire and de Musset, who flatter sensual passion and darken spiritual faith. The choice determines our destiny. Our intellectual nature is like the chameleon; it takes colour from that on which it feeds. Tell me what music you love, what dramas are your favourites, what books you read when you are alone, and I will tell you which way you are moving, upward or downward.

IV. Look now for a moment at the great

common sphere of human labour, and see how the two sides of life are contrasted here. In one aspect, all the varied toil of mankind is only the mass of separate efforts by which each individual earns daily bread and amasses wealth, little or much. He who thinks of it merely in this aspect, drops into it as a mechanical routine, plods along in it like a horse in a treadmill, now resolutely, now wearily. The only possible result of all his toil is what he can get out of it for himself. And that is limited by his capacity for eating and drinking and putting on of raiment. The sting of actual hunger and thirst and discomfort is a stimulus up to a certain point. But once beyond that point, there is nothing to animate endeavour except certain preferences for rich and unwholesome food instead of plain and wholesome food, and for costly and inconvenient clothing instead of simple and convenient clothing, and perhaps a strange desire to heap up money merely for the sake of possession. The human being who looks on labour from that side is certainly seeking the things that are beneath.

But there is another way of regarding the toil of life. It is a divine task laid upon mankind by the Creator for the conquest and cultivation of the natural world. Human labour

is a vast confederation against want and barbarism on behalf of civilization—a co-operation for the emancipation of mankind from the crushing pressure of physical necessities in order that the intellectual and spiritual powers of man may be unfolded. Toil itself, performed in this spirit, is a discipline for the soul, a medicine for sloth and vice, a teacher of self-restraint, patience, and courage. When we begin to perceive these things we see a new meaning in our work, whatever it may be. We can put heart into it, and be proud and glad of doing it well. We can lift it above its conditions by seeking the things that are above it. We can make it a vocation; a mission; a secret, divine enterprise.

V. Yes, my friends, this division between the things that are above and the things that are beneath runs through our whole life. Even religion has a higher side and a lower side, and upon our choice between these two sides depends the influence which religion is to have upon our destiny. There is a type of religion which consists chiefly of abstract doctrines embodied in a system, and another which consists chiefly of outward ceremonies arranged in a ritual. In one case all the stress is laid upon the correct statement of these doctrines; in the

other case the emphasis falls upon the punctual performance of these ceremonies. When the system is subscribed, when the ritual is observed, all is done that is necessary for salvation.

Far be it from me to say that creeds are useless. They are as essential to theology as grammars are to literature. Nor do I dream that there can ever be a church without some forms of worship. They are as needful as tactics are to an army. But when we mistake these things for the reality of religion, when we rest in them and repose upon them as sufficient to insure our personal salvation, then we forget to seek the things that are above. Inevitably such a religion must become a sensuous, selfish, sinking religion.

Far above it shines that blessed state of daily dependence upon God and intercourse with him, of real fellowship with Christ and likeness to him, of constant service and sacrifice for our fellow-men, in which alone pure and undefiled religion is found. That is what we are to seek just because it is above us. We are not to be satisfied with our poor little orthodoxies or our vain little heresies. We are not to make puppets of ourselves in our tiny rituals, and content our souls with the smell of incense or

the singing of psalms. We are not to settle down comfortably in the conviction that we are to be saved and raised from the dead at the last day. We are to look and long and struggle upward, we are to rise with Christ now towards the things that are above.

Will you take a motto for your spiritual life? It is not an inscription for your tombstone: "*Resurgam*, I shall arise, when earthly life is over, when the graves unclose." It is a watch-word for your hearts: "*Resurgo*, I arise, I am delivered, I am quickened, I begin to live upward. through Christ, for Christ, unto Christ."

IX

JOY AND POWER *

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—St. John 13:17.

I ASK you to think for a little while about the religion of Christ in its relation to happiness. This is only one point in the circle of truth at the centre of which Jesus stands. But it is an important point because it marks one of the lines of power which radiate from him. To look at it clearly and steadily is not to disregard other truths. The mariner takes the whole heavens of astronomy for granted while he shapes his course by a single star.

In the wish for happiness all men are strangely alike. In their explanations of it and in their ways of seeking it they are singularly different. Shall we think of this wish as right, or wrong; as a true star, or a will-o'-the-wisp? If it is right to wish to be happy, what are the conditions on which the fulfillment of this wish depends? These are the two questions with which I would come to Christ, seeking instruction and guidance.

* Moderator's sermon, One Hundred and Fifteenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles, 1903.

I. The desire of happiness, beyond all doubt, is a natural desire. It is the law of life itself that every being seeks and strives towards the perfection of its kind, the realization of its own specific ideal in form and function, and a true harmony with its environment. Every drop of sap in the tree flows towards foliage and fruit. Every drop of blood in the bird beats towards flight and song. In a conscious being this movement towards perfection must take a conscious form. This conscious form is happiness,—the satisfaction of the vital impulse,—the rhythm of the inward life,—the melody of a heart that has found its keynote. To say that all men long for this is simply to confess that all men are human, and that their thoughts and feelings are an essential part of their life. Virtue means a completed manhood. The joyful welfare of the soul belongs to the fullness of that ideal. Holiness is wholeness. In striving to realize the true aim of our being, we find the wish for happiness implanted in the very heart of our effort.

Now what does Christ say in regard to this natural human wish? Does he say that it is an illusion? Does he condemn and deny it? Would he have accepted Goethe's definition: "Religion is renunciation"?

Surely such a notion is far from the spirit of Jesus. There is nothing of the hardness of Stoicism, the coldness of Buddhism, in Christ's gospel. It is humane, sympathetic, consoling. Unrest and weariness, the fever of passion and the chill of despair, soul-solitude and heart-trouble, are the very things that he comes to cure. He begins his great discourse with a series of beatitudes. "Blessed" is the word. "Happy" is the meaning. Nine times he rings the changes on that word, like a silver bell sounding from his fair temple on the mountain-side, calling all who long for happiness to come to him and find rest for their souls.

Christ never asks us to give up merely for the sake of giving up, but always in order to win something better. He comes not to destroy, but to fulfill,—to fill full,—to replenish life with true, inward, lasting riches. His gospel is a message of satisfaction, of attainment, of felicity. Its voice is not a sigh, but a song. Its final word is a benediction, a *good-saying*. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

If we accept his teaching we must believe that men are not wrong in wishing for happiness, but wrong in their way of seeking it.

Earthly happiness,—pleasure that belongs to the senses and perishes with them,—earthly happiness is a dream and a delusion. But *happiness on earth*,—spiritual joy and peace, blossoming here, fruiting hereafter,—immortal happiness, is the keynote of life in Christ.

And if we come to him, he tells us four great secrets in regard to it.

i. It is inward, and not outward; and so it does not depend on what we have, but on what we are.

ii. It cannot be found by direct seeking, but by setting our faces towards the things from which it flows; and so we must climb the mount if we would see the vision, we must tune the instrument if we would hear the music.

iii. It is not solitary, but social; and so we can never have it without sharing it with others.

iv. It is the result of God's will for us, and not of our will for ourselves; and so we can only find it by giving our lives up, in submission and obedience, to the control of God.

"*For this is peace,—to lose the lonely note*
Of self in love's celestial ordered strain:
And this is joy,—to find one's self again
In him whose harmonies forever float
Through all the spheres of song, below, above,—
For God is music, even as God is love."

This is the divine doctrine of happiness as Christ taught it by his life and with his lips. If we want to put it into a single phrase, I know not where we shall find a more perfect utterance than in the words which have been taught us in childhood,—words so strong, so noble, so cheerful, that they summon the heart of manhood like marching-music: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

Let us accept without reserve this teaching of our Divine Lord and Master in regard to the possibility and the duty of happiness. It is an essential element of his gospel. The atmosphere of the New Testament is not gloom, but gladness; not despondency, but hope. The man who is not glad to be a Christian is not the best kind of a Christian.

The first thing that commended the Church of Jesus to the weary and disheartened world in the early years of her triumph was her power to make her children happy,—happy in the midst of afflictions, happy in the release from the burden of guilt, happy in the sense of Divine Fatherhood and human brotherhood, happy in Christ's victory over sin and death, happy in the assurance of an endless life. At midnight in the prison, Paul and Silas sang praises,

and the prisoners heard them. The lateral force of joy,—that was the power of the Church.

"'Poor world,' she cried, 'so deep accurst,
Thou runn'st from pole to pole
To seek a draught to slake thy thirst,—
Go seek it in thy soul.'

. . . . . .

Tears washed the trouble from her face!
She changed into a child!
'Mid weeds and wrecks she stood,—a place
Of ruin,—but she smiled!"

Much has the Church lost of that pristine and powerful joy. The furnace of civilization has withered and hardened her. She has become anxious and troubled about many things. She has sought earthly honours, earthly powers. Richer she is than ever before, and probably better organized, and perhaps more intelligent, more learned,—but not more happy. The one note that is most often missing in Christian life, in Christian service, is the note of spontaneous joy.

Christians are not as much calmer, steadier, stronger, and more cheerful than other people as they ought to be. Some Christians are among the most depressing and worryful people in the world,—the most difficult to live with.

And some, indeed, have adopted a theory of spiritual ethics which puts a special value upon unhappiness. The dark, morbid spirit which mistrusts every joyful feeling, and depreciates every cheerful virtue, and looks askance upon every happy life as if there must be something wrong about it, is a departure from the beauty of Christ's teaching to follow the dark-browed philosophy of the Orient.

The religion of Jesus tells us that cheerful piety is the best piety. There is something finer than to do right against inclination, and that is to have an inclination to do right. There is something nobler than reluctant obedience, and that is joyful obedience. The rank of virtue is not measured by its disagreeableness, but by its sweetness to the heart that loves it. The real test of character is joy. For what you rejoice in, that you love. And what you love, that you are like.

I confess frankly that I have no admiration for the phrase "disinterested benevolence," to describe the mainspring of Christian morals. I do not find it in the New Testament,—neither the words nor the thing. Interested benevolence is what I find there. To do good to others is to make life interesting and find peace for our own souls. To glorify God is to enjoy him.

That was the spirit of the first Christians. Was not St. Paul a happier man than Herod? Did not St. Peter have more joy of his life than Nero? It is said of the first disciples that they "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Not till that pristine gladness of life returns will the Church regain her early charm for the souls of men. Every great revival of Christian power—like those which came in the times of St. Francis of Assisi and of John Wesley—has been marked and heralded by a revival of Christian joy.

If we want the Church to be mighty in power to win men, to be a source of light in the darkness, a fountain of life in the wilderness, we must remember and renew, in the spirit of Christ, the relation of religion to human happiness.

II. What, then, are the conditions upon which true happiness depends? Christ tells us in the text: *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

This is the blessing with a double *if*. "If ye know,"—this is the knowledge which Christ gives to faith. "If ye do,"—this is the obedience which faith gives to Christ. Knowing and Doing,—these are the twin pillars on which the house of happiness is built. The harmony

of faith and life,—this is the secret of inward joy and power.

You remember when these words were spoken. Christ had knelt to wash the disciples' feet. Peter, in penitence and self-reproach, had hesitated to permit this lowly service of Divine love. But Christ answered by revealing the meaning of his act as a symbol of the cleansing of the soul from sin. He reminded the disciples of what they knew by faith,—that he was their Saviour and their Lord. By deed and by word he called up before them the great spiritual truths which had given new meaning to their life. He summoned them to live according to their knowledge, to act upon the truth which they believed.

I am sure that his words sweep out beyond that quiet upper room, beyond that beautiful incident, to embrace the whole spiritual life. I am sure that he is revealing to us the secret of happy living which lies at the very heart of his gospel when he says: *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

i. "If ye know,"—there is, then, a certain kind of knowledge without which we cannot be happy. There are questions arising in human nature which demand an answer. If it is denied we cannot help being disappointed,

restless, and sad. This is the price we have to pay for being conscious, rational creatures. If we were mere plants or animals we might go on living through our appointed years in complete indifference to the origin and meaning of our existence. But within us, as human beings, there is something that cries out and rebels against such a blind life. Man is born to ask what things mean. He is possessed with the idea that there is a significance in the world beyond that which meets his senses.

John Fiske has brought out this fact very clearly in his last book, *Through Nature to God.* He shows that "in the morning twilight of existence the Human Soul vaguely reached forth towards something akin to itself, not in the realm of fleeting phenomena, but in the Eternal Presence beyond." He argues by the analogy of evolution, which always presupposes a real relation between the life and the environment to which it adjusts itself, that this forth-reaching and unfolding of the soul implies the everlasting reality of religion.

The argument is good. But the point which concerns us now is simply this: The forth-reaching, questioning soul can never be satisfied if it touches only a dead wall in the dark-

ness, if its seeking meets with the reply, "You do not know, and you never can know, and you must not try to know." This is agnosticism. It is only another way of spelling unhappiness.

"Since Christianity is not true," wrote Ernest Renan, "nothing interests me, or appears worthy my attention." That is the logical result of losing the knowledge of spiritual things, —a life without real interest, without deep worth,—a life with a broken spring.

But suppose Renan is mistaken. Suppose Christianity is true. Then the first thing that makes it precious is that it answers our questions, and tells us the things that we must know in order to be happy.

Christianity is a revealing religion, a teaching religion, a religion which conveys to the inquiring spirit certain great and positive solutions of the problems of life. It is not silent, nor ambiguous, nor incomprehensible in its utterance. It replies to our questions with a knowledge which, though limited, is definite and sufficient. It tells us that this "order of nature, which constitutes the world's experience, is only one portion of the total universe." That the ruler of both worlds, seen and unseen, is God, a Spirit, and the Father of our spirits.

That he is not distant from us nor indifferent to us, but that he has given his eternal Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour. That his Spirit is ever present with us to help us in our conflicts with evil, in our efforts towards goodness. That he is making all things work together for good to those that love him. That through the sacrifice of Christ every one who will may obtain the forgiveness of sins and everlasting peace. That through the resurrection of Christ all who love him and their fellow-men shall obtain the victory over death and live for ever.

Now these are doctrines. And it is just because Christianity contains such doctrines that it satisfies the need of man.

"The first and the most essential condition of true happiness," writes Professor Carl Hilty, the eminent Swiss jurist, "is a firm faith in the moral order of the world. What is the happy life? It is a life of conscious harmony with this Divine order of the world, a sense, that is to say, of God's companionship. And wherein is the profoundest unhappiness? It is in the sense of remoteness from God, issuing into incurable restlessness of heart, and finally into incapacity to make one's life fruitful or effective."

What shall we say, then, of the proposal to adapt Christianity to the needs of the world

to-day by eliminating or ignoring its characteristic doctrines? You might as well propose to fit a ship for service by taking out its compass and its charts and cutting off its rudder. Make Christianity silent in regard to these great questions of spiritual existence, and you destroy its power to satisfy the heart.

What would the life of Christ mean if these deep truths on which he rested and from which he drew his strength, were uncertain or illusory? It would be the most pathetic, mournful, heart-breaking of all phantoms.

What consoling, cheering power would be left in the words of Jesus if his doctrine were blotted out and his precept left to stand alone? Try the experiment, if it may be done without irreverence: read his familiar discourses in the shadow of agnosticism.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is a hopeless poverty. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they know not whether they shall see God. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, for ye have no promise of a heavenly reward.

"Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, keep silence, for thou canst not tell whether there is One to hear thy voice in secret. Take no thought for the morrow, for

thou knowest not whether there is a Father who careth for thee.

"God is unknown, and they that worship him must worship him in ignorance and doubt. No man hath ascended up into heaven, neither hath any man come down from heaven, for the Son of Man hath never been in heaven. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is a dream. Man shall not live by bread alone, neither shall he listen for any word from the mouth of God. I proceeded forth and came from darkness, I came of myself, I know not who sent me. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, but I cannot give unto them eternal life, for they shall perish and death shall pluck them out of my hand. Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe not in God, ye need not believe in me. Keep my commandments, and I will not pray for you, and ye shall abide without a Comforter. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for ye know not whether there is a world to come. I came forth from darkness into the world, and again I leave the world and return to darkness. Peace I leave with you. If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said, I go into darkness, and where I am there shall ye be also."

Is it conceivable that any suffering, sorrowing human soul should be comforted and strengthened by such a message as this? Could it possibly be called a gospel, glad tidings of great joy to all people?

And yet what has been omitted or changed here in the words of Christ? Nothing but what men call doctrines: the personality of God, the divinity of Christ, the Atonement, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the sovereignty of the Heavenly Father, the truth of the divine revelation, the reality of the heavenly world, the assurance of immortal life. But it is just from these doctrines that the teaching of Jesus draws its peculiar power to comfort and inspire. They are the rays of light which disperse the gloom of uncertainty. They are the tones of celestial music which fill the heart of man with good cheer.

Let us never imagine that we can strengthen Christianity by leaving out the great doctrines which have given it life and power. Faith is not a mere matter of feeling. It is the acceptance of truth in regard to God and the world, Christ and the soul, duty and immortality. The first appeal to faith lies in the clearness and vividness, the simplicity and joy, with which this truth is presented.

There has not been too much preaching of doctrine in this age—there has been too little. And what there has been, has been too dull and cold and formal, too vague and misty, too wavering and uncertain.

What the world wants and waits for to-day is a strong, true, vital preaching of doctrine. The Church must realize anew the precious value of the truths which Christ has given her. She must not conceal them or cast them away; she must bring them out into the light, press them home upon the minds and hearts of men. She must simplify her statement of them, so that men can understand what they mean. She must not be content with repeating them in the language of past centuries. She must translate them into the language of to-day. First century texts will never wear out because they are inspired. But seventeenth century sermons grow obsolete because they are not inspired. Texts from the Word of God, preaching in the words of living men,—that is what we need.

We must think about the doctrines of Christianity more earnestly and profoundly. We must renew our Christian evidences, as an army fits itself with new weapons. The old-fashioned form of the "argument from design in

nature" has gone out with the old-fashioned books of science which it used. But there is a new and more wonderful proof of God's presence in the world,—the argument from moral ends in evolution. Every real advance of science makes the intelligent order of the universe more sublimely clear. Every century of human experience confirms the Divine claims and adds to the Divine triumphs of Jesus Christ. Social progress has followed the lines of his gospel; and he lays his hand to-day with heavenly wisdom on the social wants that still trouble us, "the social lies that warp us from the living truth." Christ's view of life and the world is as full of sweet reasonableness now as it was in the first century. Every moral step that man has taken upward has brought a wider, clearer vision of his need of such a religion as that which Christ teaches.

Let not the Church falter and blush for her doctrines. Let her not turn and go down the hill of knowledge to defend her position in the valley of ignorance. Let her go up the hill, welcoming every wider outlook, rejoicing in every new discovery, gathering fresh evidences of the truths which man must believe concerning God and new motives to the duties which God requires of man.

But in doing this we must put the emphasis of our preaching to-day where it belongs, where Christ puts it, on the doctrines that are most important to human life and happiness. We can afford to let the fine metaphysical distinctions of theology rest for a while, and throw all our force on the central, fundamental truths which give steadiness and courage and cheer to the heart of man. I will not admit that it makes no difference to a man of this age whether or not he believes in the personal God and the Divine Christ. If he really believes, it makes all the difference between spiritual strength and spiritual weakness, between optimism and pessimism. I will not admit that it makes no difference to a learned scholar or a simple labourer to-day whether he accepts or ignores the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of personal immortality. If he knows that Christ died for him, that there is a future beyond the grave, it makes all the difference between despair and hope, between misery and consolation, between the helpless frailty of a being that is puffed out like a candle, and the joyful power of an endless life.

My brethren, we must work and pray for a true revival of Christian doctrine in our age. We must deepen our own hold upon the truths

which Christ has taught us. We must preach them more simply, more confidently, more reasonably, more earnestly. We must draw from them the happiness and the help, the comfort and the inspiration, that they have to give to the souls of men. But most of all, we must keep them in close and living touch with the problems of daily duty and experience. For no doctrine, however high, however true, can make men happy until it is translated into life.

ii. Here is the second *if*, on which the power of religion to confer happiness depends: *If ye know, happy are ye if ye do these things.*

Between the knowing and the doing there is a deep gulf. Into that abyss the happiness of many a man slips, and is lost. There is no peace, no real and lasting felicity, for a human life until the gulf is closed, and the continent of conduct meets the continent of creed, edge to edge, lip to lip, firmly joined for ever.

It is not a blessing to know the things that Christ teaches, and then go on living as if they were false or doubtful. It is a trouble, a torment, a secret misery. To know that God is our Father, and yet to withhold our love and service from him; to know that Christ died for us, and yet to deny him and refuse to follow him; to know that there is an immortal life,

and yet to waste and lose our souls in the pursuit of sensual pleasure and such small portion of the world as we may hope to gain,—surely that is the deepest of all unhappiness.

But the right kind of knowing carries in its heart the doing of the truth. And the right kind of doing leads to a fuller and happier knowing. "If any man will do God's will," declares Christ, "he shall know of the doctrine."

Let a man take the truth of the Divine Fatherhood and begin to conform his life to its meaning. Let him give up his anxious worryings, his murmurings, his complainings, and trust himself completely to his Father's care. Let him do his work from day to day as well as he can and leave the results to God. Let him come to his Father every day and confess his faults and ask for help and guidance. Let him try to obey and please God for love's sake. Let him take refuge from the trials and confusions and misunderstandings of the world, from the wrath of men and the strife of tongues, in the secret of his Father's presence. Surely if he learns the truth thus, by doing it, he will find happiness.

Or take the truth of immortality. Let a man live now in the light of the knowledge that he is to live for ever. How it will deepen and

strengthen the meaning of his existence, lift him above petty cares and ambitions, and make the things that are worth while precious to his heart! Let him really set his affections on the spiritual side of life, let him endure afflictions patiently because he knows that they are but for a moment, let him think more of the soul than of the body, let him do good to his fellow-men in order to make them sharers of his immortal hope, let him purify his love and friendship that they may be fit for the heavenly life. Surely the man who does these things will be happy. It will be with him as with Lazarus, in Robert Browning's poem, *The Epistle of Karshish.* Others will look at him with wonder and say:

> *"Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?*
> *This grown man eyes the world now like a child."*

Yes, my brethren, this is the sure result of following out the doctrines of Christ in action, of living the truths that he teaches,—a simple life, a childlike life, a happy life. And this also the Church needs to-day, as well as a true revival of doctrine.

A revival of simplicity, a revival of sincerity, a revival of work: this will restore unto us the

joy of salvation. And with the joy of salvation will come a renewal and expansion of power.

The inconsistency of Christians is the stronghold of unbelief. The lack of vital joy in the Church is the chief cause of indifference in the world. The feeble energy, the faltering and reluctant spirit, the weariness in well-doing with which too many believers impoverish and sadden their own hearts, make other men question the reality and value of religion and turn away from it in cool neglect.

What, then, is the duty of the Church? What must she do to win the confidence of the world? What is the best way for her to "prove her doctrine all divine"?

First, she must increase her labours in the love of men; second, she must practise the simple life, deepening her trust in God.

Suppose that a fresh flood of energy, brave, cheerful, joyous energy, should be poured into all the forms of Christian work. Suppose that Foreign Missions and Home Missions should no longer have to plead and beg for support, but that plenty of money should come flowing in to send out every missionary that wants to go, and that plenty of the strongest and best young men should dedicate their lives to the ministry of Christ, and that every household

where his gospel is believed should find its highest honour and its greatest joy in helping to extend his kingdom.

And then suppose that the Christian life, in its daily manifestation, should come to be marked and known by simplicity and happiness. Suppose that the followers of Jesus should really escape from bondage to the evil spirits of avarice and luxury which infect and torment so much of our complicated, tangled, artificial, modern life. Suppose that instead of increasing their wants and their desires, instead of loading themselves down on life's journey with so many bags and parcels and boxes of superfluous luggage and bric-à-brac that they are forced to sit down by the roadside and gasp for breath, instead of wearing themselves out in the dusty ways of ostentation and vain show or embittering their hearts because they cannot succeed in getting into the weary race of wealth and fashion,—suppose instead of all this, they should turn to quiet ways, lowly pleasures, pure and simple joys, "plain living and high thinking." Suppose they should truly find and show their happiness in the knowledge that God loves them and Christ died for them and heaven is sure, and so set their hearts free to rejoice in life's common mercies, the light of

the sun, the blue of the sky, the splendour of the sea, the peace of the everlasting hills, the song of birds, the sweetness of flowers, the wholesome savour of good food, the delights of action and motion, the refreshment of sleep, the charm of music, the blessings of human love and friendship,—rejoice in all these without fear or misgiving, because they come from God and because Christ has sanctified them all by his presence and touch.

Suppose, I say, that such a revival of the joy of living in Christ and working for Christ should silently sweep over the Church in the Twentieth Century. What would happen? Great would be the peace of her children. Greater still would be their power.

This is the message which I have to bring to you, my brethren, in this General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. You may wonder that it is not more distinctive, more ecclesiastical, more specially adapted to the peculiarities of our own denomination. You may think that it is a message which could just as well be brought to any other Church on any other occasion. With all my heart I hope that is true. The things that I care for most in our Church are not those which divide us from other Christians, but those which unite us to them. The

things that I love most in Christianity are those which give it power to save and satisfy, to console and cheer, to inspire and bless human hearts and lives. The thing that I desire most for Presbyterianism is that it should prove its mission and extend its influence in the world by making men happy in the knowing and the doing of the things which Christ teaches.

The Church that the Twentieth Century will hear most gladly and honour most sincerely will have two marks. It will be the Church that teaches most clearly and strongly the truths that Jesus taught. It will be the Church that finds most happiness in living the simple life and doing good in the world.

X

ABRAHAM'S ADVENTURE

"*And he went out, not knowing whither he went.*"—Heb. 11 : 8.

THIS text describes a life of adventure. It brings before us one of that noble company of explorers who forsake the beaten track and push out into a new, strange, uncertain course for the sake of discovering and possessing a new world.

These men always appear heroic. There is something in them which compels our admiration. There is something in us which responds to their daring, and follows their journeyings with eager interest. I suppose it is the old, migratory instinct,—the instinct which first drew the tribes of men out from their original homes, and peopled the distant regions of the earth,—it is this deep, curious impulse of wandering and discovery which still lingers in our nature, and stirs us with strange thrills of enthusiasm, and fills us with wild day-dreams of adventure as we read or hear the story of some famous traveller in unknown lands. There is

an explorer latent in almost every man whose mind is large enough to have any interests outside of himself; and it is this unused and frustrated explorer who sits beside the fire and pores, entranced and fascinated, over the Arctic diaries of Dr. Kane or the African journals of Stanley. He recognizes and applauds the heroism of these men, who went out, not knowing whither they went.

The power which has moved adventurers is faith. This is the vital force of almost all the great explorers. They have not gone forth vaguely and aimlessly to wander to and fro upon the face of the earth. They have believed in something unseen, something that other men have not believed in, something that has seemed to the world impossible and absurd, and they have set forth to seek it. A new continent across the ocean, a new passage from sea to sea, a new lake among the forests, a new land to be possessed and cultivated, a goal beyond sight and beyond knowledge, apprehended and realized by a heroic faith, has drawn them over stormy seas and inhospitable deserts, through rugged mountains and trackless jungles. They have believed, and therefore adventured.

Nor has their faith been lacking, for the most part, in a spiritual element. There is hardly

one of them—not one, I think, among the very greatest of the world's explorers—who has not believed in God, and in his overruling Providence, and in his call to them to undertake their adventures. It is wonderful and beautiful to see how this religious element has entered into the exploration of the earth, and how faith has asserted itself in the most famous and glorious journeyings of men. We see Columbus planting the standard of the cross on the lonely beach of San Salvador; and Balboa kneeling silent, with uplifted hands, on the cliff from which he first caught sight of the Pacific; and Livingstone praying in his tent in the heart of Africa. From all the best and the bravest adventurers we hear the confession that they are the servants of a Divine Being, summoned and sent by him to a work for which they would give him the glory.

Now the life of Abraham takes an honourable place in the history of adventure for several reasons. It seems to me that its antiquity and originality entitle it to respect. But apart from this, in itself Abraham's adventure was momentous and significant. Other enterprises may appear to us more important and eventful than his; but, after all, it may be doubted whether any expedition that man has ever un-

dertaken has had larger results in the history of the world than the emergence of the father of the Hebrew race from Mesopotamian bondage. Other journeys may seem to us more striking and wonderful than his pilgrimage from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan; but if we knew the story of its hardships and perils, if we understood the complex civilization which he forsook and the barbarism which he faced, we might not think it unworthy to be compared with the most famous travels. But the one thing in this ancient story which has survived the oblivion of the centuries, the one thing which shines out in it clear and distinct, and makes it glorious and precious beyond comparison, is its imperishable and unalterable testimony to the power of faith to make a brave man face the unknown.

Abraham believed. He lived in an idolatrous country. Every one about him, even his own father and his family, worshipped idols. But Abraham's soul pierced through all these falsehoods and delusions of men to find and clasp the one living and true God who is a Spirit.

Abraham believed. He was surrounded by the unrighteousness that a corrupt religion always sanctions and intensifies. The pollutions and cruelties of heathen life touched him on

every side, and must have left their stain upon him. He himself was far from righteous. There were flaws in his character, blots upon his conduct. But one thing he did not do. He did not carve an idol out of his own sin and call it a God. He believed in a God who was not lower but higher than himself,—a God of purity, of holiness, of truth, of mercy; and that faith, having in itself the power to uplift and purify, was counted to him for righteousness,—yea, it was better than any outward conformity to a code of morality, just as religion is better than ethics, because it has the promise of growth and enlargement and an endless life.

Abraham believed. He was bound by the ties of the world, of habit, of social order, of self-interest,—by all those delicate and innumerable threads which seem to fasten a man to the ground, as the Lilliputians fastened Gulliver, and make liberty of thought, of belief, of conduct impossible. But in the midst of his bondage Abraham heard the voice of the God who had a message, a mission, a call for his soul,—a message which meant spiritual freedom, a mission which could only be fulfilled by obedience, a call which said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show

thee." Think what that involved,—separation from the past, resignation of all his customs and plans of life, the entrance upon an untrodden path, the following of an unseen and absolute guidance, the consecration of his life to a journey through strange lands, among strange people, towards a strange goal,—the final and supreme adventure of his soul. But Abraham obeyed the call. "He went out, not knowing whither he went." And that was faith.

Let us think for a little while of this aspect of faith. It is an adventure. It is a going out into the unknown future under the guidance of God.

I. All faith recognizes that life is a pilgrimage whose course and duration cannot be foreseen. That is true, indeed, whether we acknowledge it or not. Even if a man should fancy that his existence was secure, and that he could direct his own career and predict his own future, experience would teach him his mistake. But the point is that faith recognizes this uncertainty of life at the outset, and in a peculiar way, which transforms it from a curse into a blessing and makes it possible for us even to be glad that we must "go out not knowing whither we go."

For what is it that faith does with these lives of ours? It just takes them up out of our weak, trembling, uncertain control and puts them into the hands of God. It makes them a part of his great plan. It binds them fast to his pure and loving will, and fills them with his life. Unless we believe that God has made us and made us for himself, unless we believe that he has something for each one of us to do and to be, unless we believe that he knows what our life's way should be and has marked it out for us, how is it possible for us to go forward with cheerful confidence? But if we do believe this, then of course we shall be willing to accept our own ignorance of the future, and, so far from hindering us in our advance, it will encourage and strengthen us to remember that the meaning of our life is so large that we cannot understand it. It will not fit into our broken and imperfect knowledge just because it does fit perfectly into the great wisdom of God.

The man who has no faith either accepts the uncertainty of life as a necessity of fate; he is caught in the net of a hidden destiny, which to him can never seem anything else than a blind chance, because there is no purpose and no law in it,—or else he fights against the uncertainty of life, and tries to conquer it by his

own skill and prudence and pertinacity. He chooses the object of his ambition, and the line of conduct which shall lead him to it; he marks out a career for himself, and pushes forward to fulfil it according to his own plan. And then every event that crosses his plan is a cause of anxiety and irritation; every call of duty that lies outside of it is an interruption and a burden; every change that comes to him is a disappointment and a defeat; every delay in the accomplishment of his schemes frets him to the heart; and when disaster and sickness and death come near to him he trembles, for he knows that they may easily wreck and destroy his life. He means to be a self-made man; he will supply the material and construct the model; he assures himself that he knows what the result will be. But all the time he is working among forces which may shatter him and his plan in a moment. Even while he dreams of success he stands face to face with failure. It seems to me that must make life a feverish and fitful thing; a long, weary, continual anxiety of heart.

But the man who has faith accepts the uncertainty of life as the consequence of its larger significance; he cannot interpret it, because it means so much; he cannot trace its lines through to the end, because it has no end, it

runs on into God's eternity. Something better is coming into it than worldly success. Something better is coming out of it than wealth or fame or power. He is not making himself. God is making him, and that after a model which eye hath not seen, but which is to be manifest in the consummation of the sons of God. So he can toil away at his work, not knowing whether he is to see its result now or not, but knowing that God will not let it be wasted. So he can run with patience the race that is set before him, not knowing whether he shall come in first or last among his fellows, but knowing that his prize is secure. So he can labour at the edifice of his life, not knowing whether it is to be finished according to his plans or not, but knowing that it surely will be completed, and surely will find its place in the great temple which God is building. Thus his uncertainty becomes the ground of his certainty. Failure, disaster, ruin are impossible for him. Change may come to him as it comes to other men, but it does not mean calamity. Disappointment he may have to meet as other men meet it, but it cannot bring despair. Death will surely find him, and he cannot tell when it will come; but he knows that it will not come before the time; it will not break his life off in

the middle, but will finish one part of it and begin another. Loss, final and irretrievable loss,—no, the man who believes never can be lost, because he willingly goes forth not knowing whither he goes, with God for his leader and guide.

II. This, then, is the broadest meaning of faith's adventure: it is the surrender of life to a hidden guidance. And bound up together with this, as an essential part of it, we find the necessity that faith should accept the religious life as an adventure full of unknown trials and tests and temptations. No one can tell beforehand just how many hardships he must pass through, just how many sacrifices he must make, just how many assaults of evil he must resist, if he sets out to walk with God.

Abraham did not know what would meet him on his life-long journey: the day of peril in Egypt when he would break down and disgrace himself; the day of dissension with Lot when he would prove his fidelity and his love; the days of conflict with the Rephaim and the Zuzim and the Emim and the Horites, when he would overthrow them; the day of temptation when the king of Sodom would offer to make him rich; the day of sharpest sorrow when he would be called to show his supreme devotion by re-

signing his beloved son into the hands of the Lord,—all these days were hidden from him as he entered upon the long journey. All that God required of him was that he would meet them as they came; not beforehand, in imagination, in promise and definite resolution, but at the appointed hour, in the crisis of trial: then, and not till then, Abraham must face his conflict, and make his sacrifice, and hold fast his faith.

Not otherwise does God deal with us. He does not show us exactly what it will cost to obey him. He asks us only to give what he calls for from day to day. Here is one sacrifice right in front of us that we must make now in order to serve God,—some evil habit to be given up, some lust of the flesh to be crucified and slain; and that is our trial for to-day. But to-morrow that trial may be changed from a hardship into a blessing, it may become a joy and triumph to us; and another trial, new, different, unforeseen, may meet us in the way. Now, perhaps, it is poverty that you have to endure, fighting with its temptations to envy and discontent, and general rebellion against the order of the world; ten years hence, it may be wealth that will test you with its temptations to pride, and luxury, and self-reliance, and general arrogance towards your fellow-men. Now,

it may be some selfish indulgence that you have to resign; to-morrow, it may be some one whom you love, from whom you must consent to part at the call of God. To-day, it may be your ease, your comfort, your indolence that you must sacrifice for the sake of doing good in the world; to-morrow, it may be your activity, your energy, the work you delight in, that you must give up while sickness lays its heavy hand upon you, and bids you "stand and wait." To-day one thing, to-morrow another thing; and God does not tell you what it will be. He calls you to go out into your adventure not knowing whither you go.

It is this very indefiniteness of the Christian life that frightens unbelief and allures faith. It is this very necessity of facing the unknown that divides between doubting and believing souls. If we doubt the power and the love of God, if we doubt the grace and the truth of Christ, we will hesitate and hold back. We will demand to know all about the way before we enter upon it. "How much must we give up, what sacrifices must we make, how shall we ever be able to meet the trials and temptations of the future? No, we cannot go out after Christ, because we do not know where he will lead us and how hard it may be to follow."

But if we believe that this God is our God,

and will be our guide even unto death, if we believe that this Christ is our only Saviour and Master, our Divine Leader and Guide, then we can go after him the more gladly just because he does not tell us all at once what we must resign and suffer and resist for his sake. That, indeed, might crush and dishearten us; for if we knew all at once, we could not help trying our strength against it all. But since we know only to-day's temptation, to-day's trial, to-day's conflict, to-day's cross, to-day; since we know that he who ordered it is with us and will help us to bear it,—we can follow him in confidence.

"We know not what the path may be
As yet by us untrod;
But we can trust our all to thee,
Our Father and our God.

If called like Abram's child to climb
The hill of sacrifice,
Some angel may be there in time,
Deliverance may arise.

Or if some darker lot be good,
Oh teach us to endure
The sorrow, pain, or solitude,
That makes the spirit pure."

III. Once more, the adventure of faith involves the going out to meet unknown duties and to perform hidden tasks.

In one sense the scheme and outline of a religious life are clear and distinct beforehand; the principles of faith and hope and love by which it is to be guided, the laws of righteousness and truth and mercy by which it is to be governed, are fixed and unchangeable, the same always and for all men. But in another sense the religious life has no scheme and outline at all. Its responsibilities, its opportunities, its labours arise from day to day. One man has one thing to do; another man has another thing to do. The duty of the present may be changed, enlarged, transformed in the future.

See how this is brought out in the life of Abraham. At first he has only to bear witness to the true God among an idolatrous people; and then he has to set out on a perilous journey towards Canaan; and then he has to take care of his flocks and herds in the wilderness; and then he has to deliver his kinsman Lot from the sword of the tyrant Chedorlaomer; and then he has to exercise hospitality towards the angels of God. Abraham's duty is not written down and delivered to him at the beginning. It is kept secret from him, and he goes out to meet it, not knowing what it will be.

That is the law of the life of faith. The man who takes a principle into his heart commits himself to an uncertainty, he enters upon an

adventure. He must be ready for unexpected calls and new responsibilities.

The Samaritan who rode down from Jerusalem to Jericho had nothing to do in the morning but follow that highway, and take care that his beast did not stumble or hurt itself, or get tired out so that it could not finish the journey. He was just a solitary horseman, and all that he needed to do was to have a good seat in the saddle and a light hand on the bit. But at noon, when he came to the place where that unknown pilgrim lay senseless and bleeding beside the road,—then, in a moment, the Samaritan's duty changed, and God called him to be a rescuer, a nurse, a helper of the wounded.

Peter, when he rested on the housetop in Joppa, was only a pastor of the Jewish Christian church; his mission was to instruct and guide his kinsmen according to the flesh. But when the great vision of a catholic church flashed upon him, when the knocking of the messengers of the Roman centurion sounded up from the gate of the courtyard, then, in a moment, Peter's duty was changed, and he was called to go to the house of a Gentile and proclaim the gospel of Christ without respect of persons. Read the lives of the heroes of faith, and you will find that they are all like this. They set out to per-

form, not one task only, but anything that God may command. They accept Christ's commission, and set sail upon an unknown ocean with sealed orders.

That takes courage. It is a risk, a venture. But for the spiritual as truly as for the temporal life the rule is, "Nothing venture, nothing win." And is it not infinitely nobler and more inspiring to enter upon a career like that,—a career which is to run so close to God that he can speak into it and fill it with new meanings, new possibilities, new tasks, at any moment,—is not that infinitely finer and more glorious than to make a contract to do a certain thing for a certain price, as if God were a manufacturer and we were his mill-hands? It seems to me that this is the very proof and bond of friendship with him, this calling of faith to an unlimited and undefined obedience. If we will accept it, it will send us forward on a life that grows and expands and unfolds itself, and wins new powers and capacities, as it girds itself to meet the new duties that lie hidden in the future. It will not be a dull and dry routine: it will be an enterprise, a voyage of discovery, an exploration of the divine possibilities of living. And the joy of it, the enthusiasm and inspiration of it, will not be the tame thought that nothing more

can be required of us than what we already see, but the strong assurance that power will be given to us for every task that our Master sets. "Follow me," he cried, "and I will make you fishers of men." How and when and where they should labour the disciples knew not. They knew only that he would fit them for their duty when it met them. Even so he speaks to us. And even so we must follow him into the unknown future, answering his call in the noble words of St. Augustine: "Lord, give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt."

IV. Only one word remains to be added. Faith is an adventure; it is the courage of the soul to face the unknown. But that courage springs from the hope and confidence of the soul that its adventure will succeed. Beyond the unknown, beyond the uncertainties and perils and responsibilities of the earthly future, it sees the certain, the secure, the imperishable, —"an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

How grandly that certainty of faith comes out in the story of Abraham! A pilgrim and a stranger, a man without a country, wander-

ing up and down between the lands of Egypt and Chaldea, involved in strange conflicts and unexpected trials, his white tent shining in the sunlight and shaking in the wind, as it rested here and there among the highland pastures and on the steep hills of Canaan, for a hundred years, a sojourner in the land of promise as in a land not his own,—yet that old father of the faithful, that friend and follower of God, was never an aimless man, never an uncertain man, never a hopeless man. He went forth not knowing whither he went, but he also looked for "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Sublime assurance, glorious pilgrimage! Is not that the type and symbol of the life of faith? Of the nearer future, the future that lies among the mountains and valleys, the pastures and deserts of this world, it is ignorant, and yet it does not fear to face it; for it sees that the final future, the blessed rest and reward of the soul that serves and follows its Divine Master, is secure. It knows whither Christ has gone, and it knows the hidden way. And along that way it presses steadily to its goal of everlasting peace.

"On through waste and blackness,
O'er our desert road;

On till Sinai greet us,
Mountain of our God!
On past Edom's valley,
Moab's mountain wall,
Jordan's seaboard rushings,
The pillar cloud o'er all!
Past the palmy city,
Rock and hill our road,
On till Salem greet us,
City of our God!"

XI

SOLOMON'S CHOICE

"*Give me now wisdom and knowledge.*"—I Chron. 1 : 10.

THESE words were spoken by Solomon, the greatest, wisest, and in some respects the meanest of the Hebrew kings. His life is one of the standing riddles of history. Never man began so fairly and ended so darkly. The blossoms of his youth were like the flowers on the tree of life: the fruits of his old age were like Dead Sea apples, full of dust. In him genius was wedded to sin, and success was the mother of failure. Bright as was the promise of his early years, glorious as were the achievements of his manhood, the clouds that gathered round his death were so heavy and dark that men have remained in doubt whether his final place is among the saved or among the lost. The fathers of the church held opposite opinions on the subject; and in Pietro Lorenzetti's great fresco of the resurrection, in the Campo Santo at Pisa, the uncertainty of Solomon's fate is represented by the painter, who has placed him

in the middle of the picture, looking doubtfully around, not knowing whether he is to be called to the right hand or to the left. Perhaps, after all, the painter was prudent, for the question of final destiny is one which we can never solve in regard to any human being. Wise and simple, beggar and king, as they pass from our sight, we must leave them to the justice and mercy of the omniscient God.

But the questions of character and conduct as they arise here in this world are within the reach of our understanding, and it is to a study of some of these questions as they are suggested by the life of Solomon that I invite your attention now. The history of his life is illustrated in three great visions which came to him at three successive periods of his strange career. Three times God visited him in the night watches: three times the curtain which hides the future was lifted, and the darkness of his sleep was illumined with the secret flash of truth.

The first vision came at the beginning of his career, when the untried course of life was just opening before him. It contained a glorious promise and a solemn warning. It revealed the elements of strength and the elements of weakness in one of the most marvellous characters

the world has ever seen. The Lord appeared to him in Gibeon and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." Solomon's answer was in the words of the text.

The second vision came to him at the very climax of his splendour and power, when the great temple, which was the central spot of glory in his land and in his reign, was completed and dedicated. When the echoes of rejoicing had died away in the royal city, and the people were returning with gladness to their tents, then the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. The awful voice, sounding in the silence of the king's heart, declared that the prayer of dedication had been heard. The temple was accepted and blessed. God would make his dwelling there perpetually. "But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them; then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all nations."

The third vision came to the king in the de-

cline and shame of his old age, when the evils against which he had been warned had come upon him, when his heart had been entangled with strange women and stranger gods, when the misused wealth and perverted power which had been his were turning to dross and corruption within his hands. Then God was angry with him, and appeared to him once more and said: "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son." A dreadful dream, stern, angry, terrible: the only gleam of mercy in it was shown, not for Solomon's sake, but for the sake of his dead father, who was dear to God; a vision of dishonour and darkness and swift-coming disaster closing with black wings about the declining days of him who had once been the brightest and most prosperous and best beloved of Israel's monarchs. What is the meaning of it? How shall we explain it? How shall we read and understand its lesson? How is it possible that a dream so bright and fair as that which crowned his youth should turn into a dream

so black and shameful as that which shadowed his old age?

It is to solve this mystery that I ask you to turn back again to the opening vision of Solomon's life. Scrutinize it more closely, study it more deeply. See if you cannot discern in it the fatal flaw which marred the character of the royal philosopher, and through which at last his life was brought to ruin.

The circumstances of Solomon at the time of this first and most famous dream are worthy of our careful attention. He was, as you know, the youngest son of King David, who, despite his great faults, by his strong and heroic qualities, under the blessing of God, had brought the kingdom to a state of prosperity and power. The sovereignty of Israel at the close of David's long and warlike reign was something vastly richer and grander and more potent than it was when the big, blundering Saul was chosen king; and the sceptre which David held in his weary and trembling hand was the symbol of a wide and successful dominion over a turbulent but mighty people. To whom should he leave it? His two oldest sons, Absalom and Ammon, had proved unworthy, and were dead. The old king's heart turned now to his last-born child, the darling of his declining years, and to him

he gave the kingdom, calling him Solomon, "the peaceful one," and centring all the hope and love of his heart upon the happiness and prosperity of this chosen son.

How strange it is, and yet how common, for the father to desire a character and destiny for his son different from his own! The man of war desires his heir to be a man of peace. And how strange also, and yet how nearly inevitable, that the father's sins should entwine themselves with the life of the child that he loves best!

The mother of Solomon was Bathsheba, a woman of great beauty, but of whose moral character the less said the better, for she was certainly the occasion, and I cannot help feeling that she was at least passively the cause, of her husband's death and her monarch's crime; and she was the only one who profited by the whole shameful history, for it raised her not unwillingly from the wife of a common man to the wife of a king. "Now in Eastern lands and under a system of polygamy," says a wise observer, "the son is more dependent even than elsewhere upon the character of the mother." And I believe that Solomon's whole life felt the influence of such a mother. Ambitious but comfort-loving, passionate but cold, inwardly sensual but outwardly devout, fasci-

nating but intensely selfish, she was one of those whom Goethe called "problematic characters," who attain the greatest external success, but are forever unhappy and unsatisfied because they never lose or forget themselves. And from her, by birth and education, Solomon received the qualities which were brought out in his after-life.

He was admirably fitted to rule, trained in all the requirements of royalty, inspired with a sense of the dignity and responsibility of his position, every inch a king; but he was never taught to escape from his greatest foe and final destroyer, himself; and thus his noblest actions and his greatest successes were turned into failures.

But we are running before our history. Let us turn back to regard Solomon, the young king, not yet twenty years of age, seated on the throne of his father, the inheritor of a dominion among the most splendid of the Eastern world. He desires to inaugurate his reign with an act of religious worship, for this is eminently proper, and in no other way will his royal magnificence be seen to better advantage. God has forbidden the people to offer sacrifice in the high places on the mountain-tops, but custom has sanctioned the violation of this command,

and Solomon cares more for the popular usage and for a grand display than for a forgotten and obsolete law. He goes with a solemn procession to the top of Mt. Gibeon, where stands the great brazen altar of Bezaleel, and there he offers a thousand burnt-offerings, filling the whole heavens with the smoke of his kingly sacrifices and the noise of his royal worship.

The smoke rolls away. The last echoes of the solemn music die among the hills. Solomon is asleep in his tent on the mountain. And now comes that wondrous dream which foreshadows the course of his whole life. God appears to him, and asks him to choose that which he desires more than all things else. Solomon chooses "wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before the people." God approves the choice and promises to add wealth and honour. Solomon awakes and the dream is true; but, for all that, he dies in sin and sorrow and dishonour. How shall we explain the mystery?

Three questions, it seems to me, will go to the root of the matter:—

Why did God approve of Solomon's choice, and yet not approve of him?

Why was Solomon the wisest of men, and yet one of the greatest of fools?

Why did Solomon have all that he desired, and yet remain forever unsatisfied?

I. God approved of Solomon's choice because it was relatively right. As between wealth and fame and wisdom, the young king instantly and instinctively seized the greatest and noblest of the three. Wisdom is more than riches or fame, because it is the fountain of both. An understanding heart, the ability to discriminate between the good and the bad among men and causes and enterprises, is certainly the most valuable possession for every man, especially for one who is called to rule over his fellows. For without this, the richest and most powerful potentate will come to nought. How strange that men, even from the standpoint of this world, do not understand this! They crave wealth, not thinking that wealth in the hands of a fool only makes him a prey to knaves. They aspire to power, not remembering that power in the hands of one who is not wise enough for it only makes him a laughing-stock. How many a weak brother, who might have lived respected in obscurity, has become ridiculous by the sudden gift of riches or office! Wisdom is the principal thing, for if a man has that he can acquire and use the others. And Solomon's magnificence, the prosperity of his kingdom, and the fame of his reign all came from his gift of wisdom, so wisely chosen.

But although this choice was relatively right,

it was not absolutely the best. There was something better for which he might have asked, and which, if he had received it, would have brought down the blessing of God not only upon his reign, but upon his own soul forever.

What was the burden of David's prayers before God? What was the deep and burning desire of David's heart, not only in his youth, but also in his old age, growing and deepening as it was answered and fed by God? It was the longing for holiness, the consuming hunger and thirst after righteousness, which is the noblest pain and the richest want of the soul. Blessed are they who feel it, for they shall be filled. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." This was David's prayer, the highest and the best: not first an understanding heart, but first a clean heart, cleansed by the Divine pardon from the stains of guilt, and freed by the Divine power from the defilement of sin. He felt the burden of iniquity, the shame and sorrow of uncleanness, the slavery of self, and he cried to be delivered. If God would grant him this, it would be more to him than all beside. "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

This is the noblest choice. Wisdom is good,

but holiness is as far above wisdom as Christ is above Socrates. If Solomon had only been wise enough to choose this, if he had only felt his greatest weakness and his deepest need, and asked for a pure and holy heart, how rich beyond expression would have been the results of that prayer,—rich not only for this world, but for that which is to come: rich in the approval of the living God; rich in the salvation of his immortal soul; rich in an entrance into that heavenly kingdom which shall endure when all the thrones and crowns and sceptres of this world have crumbled into dust!

Let us remember that while these earthly kingdoms are founded upon wealth and power and wisdom, God's kingdom is founded on holiness of character. And though we may achieve greatness in these lower realms, though we may become merchant princes, or political rulers, or kings of thought, the least in the kingdom of heaven, yes, the simplest, poorest child who has known God's love and felt his purifying Spirit in the heart, will be greater than we are, so long as our sole inheritance is in the kingdoms of this world.

II. Why was Solomon the wisest of men, and yet one of the greatest of fools? In order to answer this question we must scrutinize his

choice very closely. And if we do this we shall see that the wisdom for which he asked was peculiar and limited. It was political wisdom, such as befits a king and renders him able to rule successfully over the minds of men. He felt that the difficulties of governing his tumultuous and rebellious people would be almost insuperable unless he had a more than human insight into character, and tact in controlling men. And so he asked for wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before the people.

Now, as a king, this was what he most needed. But Solomon was a man before he was a king. And, as a man, what he most needed was an understanding heart to guide his own life. Perhaps he thought he was wise enough for this already. Perhaps he thought he was able to rule his inner kingdom for himself, if God would only help him with the outer. And herein lay his folly, for a man can more easily control and guide the destinies of a great nation than he can bind and direct the passions of his own disordered and tumultuating heart.

It is easier to take a city than to rule your own spirit. History proves it in the lives of hundreds of great men who have been able to control the forces of politics, but not to guide their own lives, not to resist their own besetting

sins of avarice or lust. It would be strange if we could not read this lesson in our own times in the dark, sad story of Rudolph, the crown-prince of Austria. Heir to one of the proudest thrones of Europe, brilliant in his natural gifts, and developed by education into a man of many accomplishments, skilled in art and letters, and qualified to adorn his lofty station with extraordinary success, he was driven by his own hot and untamed passions, in the prime of his young manhood, to a dishonourable death.

Solomon's fatal weakness was for wives. I do not suppose that we are to understand that he was a gross sensualist. He probably sought mental excitement and change in the organization of his great household. One of his chief objects was to increase his political influence by contracting alliances with the princesses of surrounding nations. He thought he could manage the women, but he was foolish, for of course the women managed him. And still he went on adding to his burdens and entanglements, every month bringing a new princess into the royal household, and every princess bringing a new god, until at length he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, and I think we must agree that the last state of that man was worse than the first. Hated

by his people for the heavy burdens of taxation which he was forced to lay upon them for the support of his costly household, turned hither and thither by wives who neither understood his wisdom nor cared for his greatness but only for his gold, worshipping at the shrines of a hundred gods in none of whom he believed,—what an old age is this! It is the very mockery of greatness, the supreme irony of fate, that the hoary head of the wisest of monarchs should be crowned by his own hands with the cap of the fool. And all this because he did not understand that to guide one's own life is a harder and more perilous task than to rule a kingdom, because he did not learn to pray with David, "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path; send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me."

III. Let us ask, now, the third and last question. Why did Solomon have all that he desired, and yet remain unhappy? The answer is simple and straightforward: because he never forgot or lost himself. He tried to be happy. That was the chief end and aim of his life, his own success, his own felicity. He did not seek it in a low and sensual way; not in coarse pleasures nor in trifling pursuits. Solomon was far too wise for that. But in a high and grand and

royal way he sought for happiness. The delight of knowing and understanding all things, the joy of feeling that in him more wisdom was centred than in all men before or after, the pride of the most splendid temple and the most prosperous kingdom and the most beneficent reign, —thus he sought his happiness and thus he never found it; for it is a law of God that they who *will* be happy never shall be; never shall clasp the phantom after which they run so eagerly, never shall feel the deep sweet calm of a contented soul, never shall rest in perfect peace, until they cease their mad chase, forget and deny themselves, and are lost and absorbed in some noble and unselfish pursuit. Then, and then only, happiness comes, as the angels came to Jesus in the desert, and in Gethsemane, when he had renounced all hope of joy.

"He that loseth his life shall find it." The words of the Master, who was wiser than Solomon, are true now as then. We cannot have happiness until we forget to seek for it. We cannot find peace until we enter the path of self-sacrificing usefulness. We cannot be delivered from this "vain expense of passions that forever ebb and flow," this wretched, torturing, unsatisfied, unsatisfying self, until we come to Jesus and give our lives to him to be

absorbed as his life was in loving obedience to God and loving service to our fellow-men.

Let us draw this lesson from Solomon's dream. If God says to us, in the bright promise of youth, "Ask what I shall give thee," let us make the best choice, and answer: Give me grace to know thy Son, the Christ, and to grow like him; for that is the true wisdom which leads to eternal life, and that is the true royalty which brings dominion over self, and that is the true happiness which flows unsought from fellowship with the Divine Life.

XII

THE MAKING OF ST. JOHN

"*Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?*"—Luke 9 : 54.

"*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*"—I John 4 : 7.

THE common conception of the person and character of the apostle John regards him as a soft, affectionate dreamer. We imagine him as he is usually drawn by the painters, a fair, effeminate youth, with long curling hair, and a lackadaisical expression. Now that he was a youth is certain; that he was of a fair countenance is possible, perhaps even probable; but that he was in any sense effeminate is an utter misconception. He was no idle dreamer of dreams, no mild religious mystic. He and his brother James were called *Boanerges*, sons of thunder, men of fiery courage, mighty power. His symbol was not the meek and melancholy dove mourning in solitude, but the royal eagle, broad of wing, keen of eye, sweeping with fearless breast far up into the azure, bathed in the full splendours of God's sunlight. John was no

delicate, luxurious religionist, content to be "carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease." He had his own fight to wage, his own temptations to vanquish, his own adversary in the heart to conquer. And because he fought the fight bravely, enduring hardship as becometh a good soldier, his Master loved him with a peculiar love.

In looking at the development of the character of John, as it is recorded in the gospels and his own epistles, we shall find a course of affairs which is best summed up in two words:—

Antagonism and transformation.

I. First, I think, we see the character of John in antagonism to his Master. Certain natural qualities and traits in the man put him out of sympathy with Jesus in the methods which he pursued in establishing his kingdom. John was inclined to a different course. He found himself in opposition, dissatisfied, perhaps even angry.

The first of these antagonistic qualities, and probably the most fundamental, was a hot and zealous temper. His nature was quick, high-strung, impetuous. He was full of fire and force. Believing in Jesus with all his heart, John wished an instant and complete success for his ministry. Slow, patient teaching is well

enough; healing the sick is well enough; provided they succeed. But if they do not, if the people will not believe, some more heroic measure must be tried. Men must come into the kingdom of God: be persuaded in, drawn in, led in, if possible; but if not, they must be frightened in, driven in; any way they must come in. Christ's kingdom must arrive at once, and if any man stand in the way let him be burned with fire.

It was this headlong, untrained zeal that made John flame out so when passing through the inhospitable towns of Samaria. "What right," he cried, "what right have these people to stand in thy way, O Lord? What right have they to let their narrow national bigotry blind their eyes, and harden their hearts, and shut their doors against the Christ? Shall we command fire to break out from heaven, as Elias did to his enemies, and consume them?" How gentle was the rebuke, how wise the answer of Jesus to this question of John: "You do not yet understand the spirit of my gospel, the spirit of love and peace. I am come to persuade men, not to force them. If men are evil, I am not sent to slay and burn them, but to win them by the truth and save them from their sins. We must sow in patience and hope.

God will give the increase in his own good time."

The second quality of antagonism in John was his ambition. That last infirmity of noble minds was the natural growth of such a character as his. His clear fine spirit desired a lofty place. He wanted glory and honour and power. His mind was still possessed by the idea that Christ's kingdom was to have a physical manifestation, was to unfold into a splendid domination of the earth. Filled with this thought he and his brother James came to Jesus begging that they might sit enthroned on either side of him. "Can ye bear the sorrows and pains that I must bear?" "Yea, Lord," reply the overconfident disciples. "Ye shall indeed bear my sorrows and endure my anguish, and experience shall teach you how blind you have been. I cannot confer the glory of God's kingdom by arbitrary favour, as government offices are conferred. It is the fruit and the reward of character. Make yourself fit for it, learn to be as pure and teachable as a little child, and leave the rest to your heavenly Father."

II. Now you observe in regard to both of these antagonizing qualities in his young disciple, that the method of Jesus was not eradication but transformation. He did not despise

and condemn them as utterly bad. He recognized zeal and ambition as natural forces, to be changed, directed, transformed into mighty agencies for good. And that is what Jesus did for John. By constant, patient teaching, but most of all by the power of his example, Jesus gave these qualities a higher form and guided them into their true channels. I can conceive of no influence more potent to enlighten and ennoble such a character as John's than a life of constant contact with Jesus of Nazareth. How it must have sanctified and illumined his zeal to see his Master labouring so earnestly and patiently to win souls, enduring the contradiction of sinners, praying for his enemies, and giving his life as a ransom for those who hated him! Think how it must have purified and chastened John's ambition to see our blessed Lord, at the Last Supper, bend to wash the disciples' feet! That example taught John more than all formal doctrine. It had a mysterious blessed power to transform his very life.

We cannot trace more closely the process of transformation in the character of John. But we can see the result in his life and labours. Those very qualities which were his weakness became his strength. Those traits which once put him in antagonism to Christ, afterwards

bound him most closely to his Master in love and service.

His fiery zeal was purified and exalted into a clear, passionate desire to win souls in the way which Christ had appointed. The divine commission, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature," took hold of John's heart and filled it with eager courage. He went out with Peter, preaching and teaching and building up the churches of Judæa. When the Christians were expelled by persecution from Jerusalem, it was John who gathered them together in a place of refuge. Then, according to the most ancient tradition, he went down into Asia to follow up and complete the labours of Paul. He finally remained as bishop and pastor of the Church at Ephesus.

See now what has become of John's ambition. He is content to follow in the footsteps of another apostle, to dwell in a distant city of the Gentiles, in poverty and reproach, to accept an office in the feeble and persecuted Church of Jesus as the end of his life. Love to Christ has regenerated even his desires, has become the supreme and regnant passion, has made him ambitious only to serve and be like his beloved Master.

It was in this spirit that John accepted the

bishopric and ruled in Ephesus. Love was the center and theme of his ministry. He taught love, preached love, practised love. Many and beautiful are the traditions of his life. It is said that at one time a noble and amiable youth was committed by his parents to the guardianship of John. He was obliged to go away on a long journey and left his ward in the care of some of the brethren. On the apostle's return he was told that the youth had fallen into evil ways, had been tempted off into the wilderness by a band of desperate robbers, and had become their leader. John was filled with sorrow and self-reproach. He went out into the wild country, penetrated to the stronghold of the robbers' band, seized the young man by the hand, kissed it, and calling him by his familiar name, brought him back again to Ephesus.

Filled with such labours of love and glorified with visions of heavenly mysteries, the long years of the apostle wear away. Out in the great Church of Ephesus, one Sunday morning, a vast congregation is gathered. They are waiting for some one. A wide sea of faces is turned upward. An expectant hush rests over the crowd. An old man is borne in by his attendants. His long hair and beard are white as snow. His eyes shine with a soft and gentle

light. He lifts a tremulous hand. His voice is faint and slow as he speaks. Hark!

"Little children, love one another!"

The words fall like a benediction. They are the last words of that disciple whom Jesus loved.

Let us dwell for a few moments on the practical lessons to be drawn from this great and beautiful change in the life of John, and see how they bear upon our own relations to Jesus Christ and our discipleship to him. There are three truths which seem to lie embedded in this experience of the apostle.

1. Natural qualities which put us into antagonism to Christ ought not to drive us away from him.

There are many traits and dispositions, desires and qualities in human nature which put men in a position of unsympathy with the religion of Christ, make them feel uneasy and discontented under his guidance, dispose them to hang back from his service. Some of these traits of character are evil in themselves, such as untruthfulness, selfishness, intemperance. And these are things to which no man ought to cling. They are stains upon his life, and he ought to rejoice that in following Christ he must trample these shameful and unmanly things

under his feet. Surely no one of you will be kept away from Christ by the reluctance to give up that which degrades your character, and makes you base and unworthy even in the scale of manhood. But it is not of these things that I wish to speak so much as of those qualities not good or bad in themselves, but depending entirely upon the objects to which they are directed, and the way in which they are exercised.

Take such a quality as physical courage and strength. There are many young men who are kept away from the Church by a false notion that these things are out of place there—that a Christian has no use for bravery and vigour, no scope for the exercise of well-trained bodily powers and a bold, fearless spirit. But where do we find such a notion of life save in the morbid theories of weak fanatics. The Christian must indeed keep his body and spirit under control, he must not be a mere animal or a reckless bravo; but within those limits he may exercise all his daring and skill and strength. The Church has need of brave soldiers, strong labourers, dauntless explorers. Where would she be now had it not been for the bravery and endurance of those first apostles of the gospel? Where would our Protestant

Church be had not the Reformers known how to wield the sword as well as read the Bible? Is not the world better and more Christian for the bravery of Luther and Livingstone and Havelock? "I write unto you young men be cause you are strong." That was a good reason; for Jesus Christ has need of strong and brave disciples, to stand up well against the assaults of evil, to push through desert and jungle, over mountains and stormy seas with the message of the gospel, to endure hardness as good soldiers, to fight and not be weary, to run and not faint.

An eager and impetuous zeal often puts men out of sympathy with Christ. They find Christianity too slow, too imperfect in its methods and results. Sometimes this zeal takes the form of self-criticism. Men say: "I want a religion that shall make me good altogether and at once. I want to feel that I am utterly changed, transfigured, renewed; and the lack of this is what keeps me away from Christ." Is that true? Are you sincere? Then how foolish you are to stay away from Christ. For where else shall you find even the beginnings of that blessed change which you desire? Is it not better to have it slowly than not at all? And if you come to him, you will find that your zeal to be made

holy is not half so great as his willingness to help you and to perfect his will in your life.

But more often this antagonistic overzeal expresses itself in harsh criticism of the Church and dissatisfaction with her success. Men complain that so few Christians are Christlike and so few sinners are converted. Now if that be merely a hypocritical excuse for avoiding the service of Christ there is nothing to be said. There is no Pharisaism so contemptible or so incorrigible. But if it spring from an honest and fervent zeal for the cause of Christ and a longing that his kingdom may have a wider and more glorious success, then it will not stand outside and spend its strength in bitter criticism, but come inside and labour earnestly for reformation. And the more eagerly and zealously men labour for the kingdom of Christ, the better they will understand that his methods are the best, and that the kingdom is to be established not by calling down fire from heaven, but by the earnest, patient teaching of divine truth and the manifestation of Christlike love.

2. These very qualities which seem at first antagonistic, may become the most blessed in the service of Christ.

He does not propose to eradicate and destroy them, but to purify, direct, and use them in his

kingdom, as the skillful inventor binds the winds to industry and makes the rushing torrents do his work. I have spoken of the noble tasks which physical courage and strength have performed for Christ. The life of John has shown us how a high-strung and ambitious nature may be used in his service. What a grand quality is zeal when it is sanctified and guided by a true devotion to Christ! That zeal which makes martyrs and missionaries and reformers—that is what the Church needs to-day, a zeal that shall make us restless and discontented in the right way: not discontented with the plans and methods of Christ, but with our own feeble and imperfect execution of them; so that we shall strive to make Christianity more active, more thorough, more aggressive, to remove the obstacles, the shameful and harmful inconsistencies, to clear the way so that the gospel of Christ may have free course and be glorified.

So also of true ambition. It can be made most useful in the service of Christ. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," wrote the apostle Paul. What a noble ambition was his! To climb ever higher and higher in his spiritual attainments, to be more and more effective in his labours for Christ. If we could only get more of this right ambition how it would purify

our modern life! We should be rid of the insane thirst for office in church and state. We should desire not to be famous, but to do good; not to rule, but to be fit for it. We should long for character rather than reputation, for inward merit rather than outward honour. Our aspirations after a pure and lofty life would lift us above our present meanness and littleness, and we should press eagerly towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

3. Finally, the way to have our natures thus nobly transformed is by a close and living contact with Christ. His teaching, his example, his companionship alone can change us into his image.

There is an eastern legend of a rose so sweet that even the earth which lies around its roots becomes permeated with fragrance and little bits of it are sold as amulets and worn by princes. You and I are but common clay, but if we will lie close to Jesus Chirst, his sweetness will flow through our lives and make them fragrant and precious for ever.

XIII

CHRIST THE FOUNDATION

"*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*"—I Cor. 3 : 11.

ALL schools of architecture agree in one point. However they may differ in theories of construction or schemes of ornamentation, they are at one in teaching that the most important part of every building is the foundation.

The apostle Paul translates this truth into the terms of religion. He says that the essential thing is to have a sure foundation for faith and character and life. He declares that such a foundation has been laid in Jesus Christ. And he adds that there is nothing in the universe to take the place of that foundation as a basis for all that is permanent and precious in existence.

The apostle has been dead eighteen hundred years, but that splendid claim still stands. The number of those who have proved it by personal experience has increased century by century. Men have tried to lay other foundations, but

they and their works have vanished. The bonfires have been kindled on a thousand hills, and have burned out. The floods have risen, and fallen, and swept away the frail edifices that have been built upon the sands of time. But the Impregnable Rock remains unshaken, lifting all the lives that have been founded upon it high above the wreck of ages, clear outlined against the sky, like a crown of towers and a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Let us try to dig down into the meaning of this text and take the measure of it, as men have measured and admired the great foundations which modern archæology has unearthed below the site of the ancient temple at Jerusalem.

In what sense is Jesus Christ the fundamental reality of human life?

I. Christ is the foundation of a reasonable faith. He underlies all true theology. Without him we cannot "assert eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to man." The moral government of the universe becomes all dark and confused, "a mighty maze and all without a plan," unless we believe in a divine Redeemer. The problem of the existence of evil under the rule of an absolutely good God

is insoluble, and, I say it reverently, the moral character of the Supreme Being is a riddle to our conscience, unless we can discover a personal, saving, redeeming revelation of the divine Love in the same world into which the Omnipotent has permitted sin to enter.

> *"Till God in human flesh I see*
> *My thoughts no comfort find;*
> *The holy, just and sacred Three*
> *Are terrors to my mind."*

Now the trouble with men who have made systems of doctrine about God, even when they have believed sincerely in this revelation of God in Christ, is that they have made it supplemental, instead of fundamental, to their thought. They have told us first what God must be, reasoning from their own dim conception of omnipotence and omnipresence and omniscience. They have given their definitions of divine justice and mercy, and laid down the conditions under which they are exercised. They have planned out the scope of foreknowledge, and traced the course of predestination. They have explained the mystery of sacraments, and made an orderly arrangement of the means of grace. And then, in this vast and complex system, they have found a place for Christ, and

they have unconsciously fitted Christ to that place.

But the true way is just the reverse. It is first to accept Christ, and then to fit our theology to the truth as it is in him. He is the foundation already laid, and to him the outline and structure of the building must be conformed. The mercy and justice of Christ are the mercy and justice of God. There is no predestination outside of Christ. All the divine foreknowledge is summed up and expressed in him, for he is the Wisdom and the Word of God. The sacraments are but signs and seals of him; and he is the means of grace whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature.

And what follows from building the edifice of the faith in this way, on Christ as the foundation? Three things: First, it becomes sure and steadfast. Christ does not offer us a knowledge of God half so large, half so complete in logic and arrangement, as that which is offered by many human teachers. He leaves many secrets untold, many mysteries unsolved. But there is this difference. Their complete theodicies are insecure and perishable. The failure of one link in the chain of logic lets the whole bridge which is suspended by it fall into the roaring tide of doubt. But Christ's revelation

of God, confessedly limited and adapted to our finite minds, is a revelation of fact, of life, of reality, of true communion with the Father through the Son, and therefore it is firm and imperishable. It is not suspended over life. It rests upon life.

Second: the Christian faith built upon Christ has a self-rectifying and purifying power. It has power to discover and reject the false elements which are continually thrusting themselves into Christianity from heathendom: superstitions and perversions and assumptions; cruel and unworthy conceptions of God; elements borrowed in fact from the pagan religions and false philosophies. These things, I say, are detected and exposed by the effort to thoroughly Christianize theology. Every great purification and revival in theology has come through men like Paul, like Chrysostom, like Francis of Assisi, like Martin Luther, like John Wesley, whose whole intellectual being was built upon personal contact with God in Jesus Christ.

Third: the faith built upon Christ has overcome the protest which human nature has always raised against false views of God, even when they have been proclaimed by ecclesiastical authority. "The God whom we know

through Jesus Christ commends himself to bad men as well as to good men." We may not be able now to persuade all men to believe in God, to love him, to serve him, any more than the apostles were able to do so; but at least, if we can present to the world the view of God which is in Christ Jesus, we shall hear from all men the confession that this is a God worthy to be worshipped and adored and served.

II. From this point it is but a short and easy step to the next proposition. Jesus Christ is the foundation of a truly preachable and powerful gospel. It was of this chiefly that St. Paul was thinking when he wrote this text. Other preachers had come into his beloved church at Corinth, working not only with new methods, but as he feared on a new basis. They had attempted to introduce personal considerations of loyalty to certain parties in the church as the basis of the Christian fellowship; they had taught in such a way that adherence to human theories, and minor points of doctrine, and personal leaders, seemed to be the principal thing, and fidelity to Jesus Christ a subordinate thing. The emphasis was wrong. The foundation was displaced. The whole building was in danger.

Paul cried in the fervour of his conviction, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Not that Paul himself never preached on other subjects than the person of Christ. His range of teaching was rich and generous, vastly beyond that of other preachers. There was no subject of thought, from the mysteries of divine preëxistence to the ultimate relation of the irrational creatures to the manifestation of the sons of God, which was beyond the interest of his faith. There was no sphere of human duty, from that of the ruler on his throne to that of the slave in his master's house, of which he did not dare to speak, with fearless, loving, inspiring, and commanding voice. But back of all that he said—nay, supporting and upholding all that he said on every subject—was the consciousness that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. That was the deep foundation of every argument and every exhortation; and that is the secret of preaching the gospel.

Nothing is foreign to the gospel. It may enter, it must enter, into every region of human thought and conduct. But it must always be true to itself. It may not come as a philosophy, a morality, a criticism, but always as glad tidings. Many men preach as if Christ had never

really lived. Whatever subject the preacher touches, he must see it and treat it in the light that comes from the manger-cradle, the uplifted cross, and the empty sepulchre. The former things are passed away, all things are become new; reason itself is transformed and recreated, and conscience is reilluminated, by the fact that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. No man in the world to-day has such power as he who can make his fellowmen feel that Christ is a reality.

It is said of David Hume, the great skeptic, that he once went to listen to the preaching of John Brown of Haddington. "That is the man for me," said Hume; "he means what he says; he speaks as if Jesus Christ were at his elbow." The man of the world was right. No preaching can convince *every* man. But the only preaching that can convince or help *any* man is that in which every argument and every appeal rests at last upon Jesus Christ, the divine and immutable foundation of the gospel.

III. From this it follows, in the third place, that Jesus Christ is the true and sure foundation of the moral life. For as the end of the gospel is to make men good, and as the essence

of the gospel is the setting forth of Jesus Christ, it must follow that the best means of making men good is to bind their hearts in living faith to Jesus.

But is this a fact, or is it only a dream of the ardent and enthusiastic Christian? Can we indeed find Christ at the foundation of what is best in humanity? I think we can. As a matter of history I think we can see that all the finest and noblest things in the world to-day,—the hospital, the asylum, the sanctities of home, the responsibilities of government, the liberties of mankind, are founded upon Christ. Without Christ they would never have been possible. Without Christ the very beginnings and foreshadowings of them which were scattered through the world, would still have been frustrated and crushed.

Look at every forward step which the world for eighteen hundred years has taken out of the darkness into the broader light of a new day, and at the head of the marching host you will see the banner of Christ Jesus, and behind the movement you will feel the mighty impulse of Christian faith. Look at the splendid uprisings of humanity against tyranny, and injustice, and corruption, and wickedness in high places; and whether the revolution was accom-

plished in the awful arbitrament of battle or by the peaceful power of the ballot, you will see that the force which won the victory was the awakened and enkindled sentiment of those who acknowledge the law of Jesus Christ as supreme and call him their Master and Lord.

Take the Christian sentiment clean out of the people of any land and see how many reformations you can accomplish. Nay, let your accomplished reformation once shift its foundation from the law of justice and righteousness and brotherhood in Jesus Christ, let the agency to which you have committed the power wrested from unworthy hands forget the power which created it, and become a mere party among the parties, and see how soon it will decay and crumble, and need to be swept away.

Mark you, we do not say that there are no good workers in good cause except those who are professedly Christians. That would be contrary to Christ's own teaching. He taught his disciples to welcome all who would labour with them in the casting out of devils, and said, "He that is not against us is for us." Nor do we say that there is no virtue in humanity save that which feels and confesses its personal dependence upon Christ. For there are many noble principles and beautiful characters un-

consciously built upon a Christian foundation, laid by a mother's prayers, a father's example, though the builder may not know or acknowledge it. Yes, there are even larger edifices, societies, nations, it may be, which are unconsciously based upon the moral ideal which is in Christ, and which silently acknowledge Christianity as the law of laws, even though God be not named in their constitution. They are like the villages in Egypt which were unwittingly erected upon the massive foundations of some ancient temple.

But what we say now is, that the only *security* for the conscious and deliberate building of the moral life, whether of communities or individuals, lies in making Jesus Christ the foundation. And why? Because there is no permanence of character, there is no consistency of action, without a clear and perfect and immutable ideal. And there is no such ideal except Christ.

Men have tried to create ideals for themselves, and for a time they have seemed beautiful, but they have always failed and fallen. Each of these ideals has had its own virtues; but the "defects of its virtues" have ultimately destroyed it. There was a philosophic ideal in the days of the Stoics and Epicureans. But

it was perverted and corrupted into the unspeakable frivolity and triviality of the later Alexandrian schools. There was a military ideal in the Middle Ages; but it hardened into intolerable cruelty and tyranny. There was an artistic ideal in the Renaissance; but it decayed in luxury and self-indulgence. There was a social ideal in the French Revolution, and it produced some noble and self-sacrificing men, some earnest and fervent efforts for the welfare of the world. That social ideal still survives, and there are some who think that it is the hope of the future. Its programme is to change the structure of society first, and consider the truth of Christianity afterwards. But even in a hundred years how has that ideal been warped and distorted into the ugly shapes of Anarchism and Nihilism! And if it should carry out its programme of material equality for every man, what security would that give for moral elevation and purity? What warrant have we for thinking that "the new society" would not be a dead level of equally uncomfortable, equally sensual, equally faithless, and equally hopeless men and women, with not a thought beyond this world, and not a care except to see that no one got a larger share of the loaves and fishes than they secured for themselves?

No, the one ideal that is pure and permanent and satisfying, the one ideal that actually has had power to keep itself alive and prove itself victorious over the disintegrating forces of sin and death, is the ideal in Jesus Christ. The men and women who have built upon that foundation have been the best men and women, and have left behind them the most enduring and glorious work, even in the very domain where the human ideals have been erected as supreme.

What contributions to human intelligence have been made to compare with those of Christian philosophers like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas and Bacon and Leibnitz and Locke and Kant and Newton? What soldiers under the Roman eagles fought like the Christian legion, and what knight left such a record of chivalry as Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche?* What poets sang like Dante and Milton? What artists painted like Michael Angelo and Raphael? What apostles of humanity have made such real and lasting contributions to the happiness of mankind as William Wilberforce and Robert Raikes and John Howard and Florence Nightingale? Yes, what have all the social theorists and dreamers outside the circle of Christian charity done that will

compare for a moment with the silent, ceaseless ministry of service to the sick and wounded in great hospitals and crowded cities, of protection to the helpless and comfort to the friendless, of instruction to the ignorant and care to the forsaken, which thousands of men and women have been quietly giving, through the centuries, for Christ's sake?

If you want to be good and to do good, come to Christ and let him teach you. Form your character on his model, and let the ideal of a life in Christ, for Christ, like Christ, be the foundation on which you build for time and eternity.

IV. Jesus Christ is the only foundation of the Christian Church. The church visible is not confined to any one nation or denomination. It is composed of all who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. But the visible church is only the framework and scaffolding of the invisible church, the Communion of Saints, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. How majestic, how full of flashing splendours, are the words in which the inspired apostles describe this glorious edifice,—"Built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone"; "To whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also are built up a

spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"!

Taking this description of the invisible church into my hand as a torch to light my way, I go abroad through the Christian world and back through the ages, like one who walks through the long-drawn aisles, and mysterious crypts, and manifold chapels, of some magnificent Cathedral. I see and hear many things that astonish and perplex me. There are strange pictures on some of the walls, and strange incense rises from some of the altars. There are sacrifices offered which are carnal, and materials used which are not spiritual. But these human incrustations which have gathered about Christianity are disappearing and dropping away. Behind them rise the mighty, aerial walls. Through the passing words of error and folly framed by the lips of men, like the sound of the sea, like the voice of many waters, rises the Creed of Christendom. "I believe in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, begotten before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary."

And then sweeter than angels' songs breaks forth the solemn chant, "The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee. The Father of an infinite majesty, Thine adorable true and only Son, also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ, Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father."

XIV

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord.—Romans 14 : 6.

I

CHRISTMAS GIVING

THE custom of exchanging presents on a certain day in the year is much older than Christmas, and means much less. It has obtained in almost all ages and among many different nations. It is a fine thing or a foolish thing, as the case may be; an encouragement to friendliness, or a tribute to fashion; an expression of good nature, or a bid for favour; an outgoing of generosity, or a disguise of greed; a cheerful old custom, or a futile old farce, according to the spirit which animates it and the form which it takes.

But when this ancient tradition of a day of gifts was transferred to the Christmas season, it was brought into vital contact with an idea which must transform it, and with an example which must lift it up to a higher plane. The

example is the life of Jesus. The idea is unselfish interest in the happiness of others.

The great gift of Jesus to the world was himself. He lived with and for men. He kept back nothing. In every particular and personal gift that he made to certain people there was something of himself that made it precious.

For example, at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, it was his thought for the feelings of the giver of the feast, and his wish that every guest should find due entertainment, that lent the flavour of a heavenly hospitality to the wine which he provided.

When he gave bread and fish to the hungry multitude who had followed him out among the hills by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were refreshed and strengthened by the sense of the personal care of Jesus for their welfare, as much as by the food which he bestowed upon them. It was another illustration of the sweetness of "a dinner of herbs, where love is."

The gifts of healing which he conferred upon many different kinds of sufferers were, in every case, evidences that Jesus was willing to give something of himself, his thought, his sympathy, his vital power, to the men and women among whom he lived. Once, when a paralytic was brought to Jesus on a bed, he surprised

everybody, and offended some, by giving the poor wretch the pardon of his sins, before he gave new life to his body. That was just because Jesus thought before he gave; because he desired to satisfy the deepest need; because in fact he gave something of himself in every gift. All true Christmas-giving ought to be after this pattern.

Not that it must all be solemn and serious. For the most part it deals with little wants, little joys, little tokens of friendly feeling. But the feeling must be more than the token; else the gift does not really belong to Christmas.

It takes time and effort and unselfish expenditure of strength to make gifts in this way. But it is the only way that fits the season.

The finest Christmas gift is not the one that costs the most money, but the one that carries the most love.

II

CHRISTMAS LIVING

How seldom Christmas comes—only once a year; and how soon it is over—a night and a day! If that is the whole of it, it seems not much more durable than the little toys that one buys of a fakir on the street-corner. They

run for an hour, and then the spring breaks, and the legs come off, and nothing remains but a contribution to the dust heap.

But surely that need not and ought not to be the whole of Christmas—only a single day of generosity, ransomed from the dull servitude of a selfish year,—only a single night of merry-making, celebrated in the slave-quarters of a selfish race! If every gift is the token of a personal thought, a friendly feeling, an unselfish interest in the joy of others, then the thought, the feeling, the interest, may remain after the gift is made.

The little present, or the rare and long-wished-for gift (it matters not whether the vessel be of gold, or silver, or iron, or wood, or clay, or just a small bit of birch bark folded into a cup), may carry a message something like this:

"I am thinking of you to-day, because it is Christmas, and I wish you happiness. And to-morrow, because it will be the day after Christmas, I shall still wish you happiness; and so on, clear through the year. I may not be able to tell you about it every day, because I may be far away; or because both of us may be very busy; or perhaps because I cannot even afford to pay the postage on so many let-

ters, or find the time to write them. But that makes no difference. The thought and the wish will be here just the same. In my work and in the business of life, I mean to try not to be unfair to you or injure you in any way. In my pleasure, if we can be together, I would like to share the fun with you. Whatever joy or success comes to you will make me glad. Without pretense, and in plain words, good-will to you is what I mean, in the Spirit of Christmas."

It is not necessary to put a message like this into high-flown language, to swear absolute devotion and deathless consecration. In love and friendship, small, steady payments on a cash basis are better than immense promissory notes. Nor, indeed, is it always necessary to put the message into words at all, nor even to convey it by a tangible token. To feel it and to act it out—that is the main thing.

There are a great many people in the world whom we know more or less, but to whom for various reasons we cannot very well send a Christmas gift. But there is hardly one, in all the circles of our acquaintance, with whom we may not exchange the touch of Christmas life.

In the outer circles, cheerful greetings, cour-

tesy, consideration; in the inner circles, sympathetic interest, hearty congratulations, honest encouragement; in the inmost circle, comradeship, helpfulness, tenderness,—

"Beautiful friendship tried by sun and wind
Durable from the daily dust of life."

After all, Christmas-living is the best kind of Christmas-giving.

III

KEEPING CHRISTMAS

It is a good thing to observe Christmas day. The mere marking of times and seasons, when men agree to stop work and make merry together, is a wise and wholesome custom. It reminds a man to set his own little watch, now and then, by the great clock of humanity which runs on sun time.

But there is a better thing than the observance of Christmas day, and that is, keeping Christmas.

Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for you; to ignore what the world owes you, and to think what you owe the world; to put your rights in the background,

and your duties in the middle distance, and your chances to do a little more than your duty in the foreground; to see that your fellow-men are just as real as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts, hungry for joy; to own that probably the only good reason for your existence is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to give to life; to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe, and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness—are you willing to do these things even for a day? *Then you can keep Christmas.*

Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children; to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old; to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough; to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear on their hearts; to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you; to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you; to make a grave for your ugly thoughts, and a garden for your

good thoughts, with the gate open—are you willing to do these things even for a day? *Then you can keep Christmas.*

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world—stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death—and that the life of Jesus which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love? *Then you can keep Christmas.*

And if you keep it for a day, why not always?

But you can never keep it alone.

XV

PEACE IN THE SOUL*

Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you.—St. John 14: 27.

PEACE is one of the great words of the Holy Scriptures. It is woven through the Old Testament and the New like a golden thread. It inheres and abides in the character of God,—

> "*The central peace subsisting at the heart*
> *Of endless agitation.*"

It is the deepest and most universal desire of man, whose prayer in all ages has been, "Grant us Thy Peace, O Lord." It is the reward of the righteous, the blessing of the good, the crown of life's effort, and the glory of eternity.

The prophets foretell the beauty of its coming and the psalmists sing of the joy which it brings. Jesus Christ is its Divine Messiah, its high priest and its holy prince. The evangelists and prophets proclaim and preach it. From

* The two following sermons were preached at Eastertide, 1919, in the Park Avenue Church, New York, the pastor of which is my son and friend, Tertius van Dyke.

beginning to end the Bible is full of the praise of peace.

Yet there never was a book more full of stories of trouble and strife, disaster and sorrow. God himself is revealed in it not as a calm, untroubled, self-absorbed Deity, occupied in beatific contemplation of his own perfections. He is a God who works and labours, who wars against the evil, who fights for the good. The psalmist speaks of him as "The Lord of Hosts, strong and mighty in battle." The Revelation of St. John tells us that "There was war in Heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon." Jesus Christ said: "I came not to send peace, but a sword."

It is evident, then, that this idea of "peace," like all good and noble things, has its counterfeit, its false and subtle adversary, which steals its name and its garments to deceive and betray the hearts of men. We find this clearly taught in the Bible. Not more earnestly does it praise true peace than it denounces false peace.

There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked (Isaiah 48 : 22).

For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace (Jer. 8 : 11).

If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes (St. Luke 19 : 42).

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8 : 6).

There never was a time in human history when a right understanding of the nature of true peace, the path which leads to it, the laws which govern it, was more necessary or more important than it is to-day.

The world has just passed through a ghastly experience of war at its worst. Never in history has there been such slaughter, such agony, such waste, such desolation, in a brief space of time, as in the four terrible years of conflict which German militarism forced on the world in the twentieth century. Having been in the midst of it, I know what it means.

Now we have "supped full with horrors." We have had more than enough of that bloody banquet. The heart of humanity longs for peace, as it has always longed, but now with a new intensity, greater than ever before. Yet the second course of war continues. The dogs fight for the crumbs under the peace-table. Ignorant armies clash by night. Cities are

bombarded and sacked. The Bolsheviki raise the red flag of violence and threaten a war of classes throughout the world.

You can never make a golden age out of leaden men, or a peaceful world out of lovers of strife.

Where shall peace be found? How shall it be attained and safeguarded? Evidently the militarists have assaulted it with their doctrine that might makes right. Evidently the pacifists have betrayed it with their doctrine of passive acceptance of wrong. Somewhere between these two errors there must be a ground of truth on which Christians can stand to defend their faith and maintain their hope of a better future for the world.

Let me begin by speaking of *Peace in the Soul.* That is where religion begins, in the heart of a person. Its flowers and fruits are social. They are for the blessing of the world. But its root is personal. You can never start with a class-conscious or a mass-conscious Christianity. It must begin with just you and God.

Marshal Joffre, that fine Christian soldier, said a memorable thing about the winning of the war: "Our victory will be the fruit of individual sacrifice." So of the coming of peace

on earth we may say the same: it will be the fruit of the entrance of peace into individual hearts and lives.

A world at war is the necessary result of human restlessness and enmities. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?" Envy, malice, greed, hatred, deceit,—these are the begetters of strife on earth.

A world at peace can come only from the co-operation of peaceful human spirits. Therefore we must commence to learn what peace is, by seeking it in our souls through faith; and we must find it, one at a time.

Christ promised peace to his disciples at the Communion in that little upper room in Jerusalem, nineteen hundred years ago. Evidently it was not an outward but an inward peace. He told them that they would have much trouble in the world. But he assured them that this could not overcome them if they believed in him and in his Father God. He warned them of conflict, and assured them of inward peace.

What are the elements of this wondrous gift which Christ gave to his disciples, and which he offers to us?

I. First, the peace of Christ is the peace of being divinely loved.

Nothing rests and satisfies the heart like the sense of love. A little child, which has grown tired and fretful at its play, is frightened suddenly by some childish terror. Weeping, it runs to its mother. She takes the child in her arms, folds it to her breast, bends over it, and soothes it with fond words which mean only this: "I love you." Very soon the child sinks to rest, contented and happy, in the sense of being loved. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." In Jesus Christ God is stretching out his arms to us, drawing us to him, enfolding us in the secret of peace. If we believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, he makes us sure of a Divine affection, deep, infinite, inexhaustible, imperishable. "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." God, who "spared not his dearly-beloved Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

II. The Christian peace is the peace of being divinely controlled. The man who accepts Jesus Christ truly, accepts him as Master and Lord. He believes that Christ has a purpose for him, which will surely be fulfilled; work for him, which will surely be blessed if he only tries to do it. Most of the discords of life come from a conflict of authorities, of plans, of purposes. Suppose that a building were going up, and the architect had one design for it, and the builder had another. What perplexity and confusion there would be! How ill things would fit! What perpetual quarrels and blunders and disappointments! But when the workman accepts the designer's plan and simply does his best to carry that out, harmony, joyful labour, and triumph are the result. If we accept God's plan for us, yield to him as the daily controller and director of our life, our work, however hard, becomes peaceful and secure. No perils can frighten, no interruptions can dishearten us.

Not many years ago some workmen were digging a tunnel, when a sudden fall of earth blocked the mouth of the opening. Their companions on the outside found out what had happened, and started to dig through the mass of earth to the rescue. It was several hours

before they made their way through. When they went in they found the workmen going on with their labour on the tunnel. "We knew," said one of them, "that you'd come to help us, and we thought the best way to make time pass quick was to keep on with the work." That is what a Christian may say to Christ amid the dangers and disasters of life. We know that he will never forsake us, and the best way to be at peace is to be about his business. He says to us: "As the Father sent me, even so send I you."

III. The Christian peace is the peace of being divinely forgiven.

"In every man," said a philosopher, "there is something which, if we knew it, would make us despise him." Let us turn the saying, and change it from a bitter cynicism into a wholesome truth.

In every one of us there is something which, if we realize it, makes us condemn ourselves, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, and long for forgiveness.

It is this consciousness of sin, of evil in our hearts and lives, that makes us restless and unhappy. The plasters and soothing lotions with which the easy-going philosophers of modern times cover it up, do not heal it; they only

hide it. There is no cure for it, there is no rest from it, except in the divine forgiveness. There is no sure pledge of this except in the holy sacrifice and promise of Christ, "Son, daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace."

Understand, I do not mean that what we need and want is to have our sins ignored and overlooked. On the contrary, that is just what would fail to bring us true rest. For if God took no account of sins, required no repentance and reparation, he would not be holy, just, and faithful, a God whom we can adore and love and trust.

Nor do I mean that what we need is merely to have the punishment of sins remitted. That would not satisfy the heart. Is the child contented when the father says, "Well, I will not punish you. Go away"? No, what the child wants is to hear the father say, "I forgive you. Come to me." It is to be welcomed back to the father's home, to the father's heart, that the child longs.

Peace means not to have the offense ignored, but to have it pardoned: not to have the punishment omitted, but to have the separation from God ended and done away with. That is the peace of being divinely forgiven,—a peace which recognizes sin, and triumphs over

it,—a peace which not merely saves us from death but welcomes us home to the divine love from which we have wandered.

That is the peace which Christ offers to each one of us in his Gospel. We need it in this modern world as much as men and women ever needed it in the old world. No New Era will ever change its meaning or do away with its necessity. Indeed, it seems to me that we need this old-fashioned religion to-day more than ever.

We need it for our own comfort and strength. We need it to heal the spiritual wounds of war. We need it to deliver us from the vanity and hollowness, the fever and hysteria of the present age. We need it to make us better soldiers and workers for every good cause. Peace is coming to all the earth some day through Christ. And those who will do most to help him bring it are the men and women to whom he gives Peace in the Soul.

XVI

PEACE AND IMMORTALITY

THE SPIRIT OF EASTER

Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.—Hebrews 7 : 16.

THE message and hope of immortality are nowhere more distinctly conveyed to our minds than in connection with that resurrection morn when Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. The anniversary of that day will ever be the festival of the human soul. Even those who do not clearly understand or fully accept its meaning in history and religion,—even children and ignorant folk and doubters and unbelievers,—yes, even frivolous people and sullen people, feel that there is something in this festival which meets the need and longing of their hearts. It is a day of joy and gladness, a day of liberation and promise, a day for flowers to bloom and birds to sing, a day of spiritual springtide and immortal hope.

Mankind desires and needs such a day. We are overshadowed in all our affections and aspirations, all our efforts and designs, by the

dark mystery of bodily death; the uncertainty and the brevity of earthly existence make us tremble and despair; the futility of our plans dismays us; the insecurity of our dearest treasure in lives linked to ours fills us with dismay.

Is there no escape from Death, the tyrant, the autocrat, the destroyer, the last enemy? Why love, why look upward, why strive for better things if this imperator of failure, ultimate extinction, rules the universe? No hope beyond the grave means no peace this side of it. A life without hope is a life without God. If Death ends all, then there is no Father in Heaven in whom we can trust. Who shall deliver us from the body of this Death?

Now comes Easter with its immortal promise and assurance. Jesus of Nazareth, who died on Calvary, a martyr of humanity, a sacrifice of Divinity, is alive and appears to his humble followers. The manner of his appearance, to Mary Magdalene, to his disciples, is not the most important thing. The fact is that he did appear. He who was crucified in the cause of righteousness and mercy, lives on and for ever. The message of his resurrection is "the power of an endless life."

The proof of this message is in the effect that it produced. It transformed the handful of

Jesus' followers from despair to confidence. It gave Christianity its growing influence over the heart of humanity. It is this message of immortality that makes religion vital to the human world to-day, and essential to the foundation of peace on earth.

We must not forget in our personal griefs and longings, in our sorrows for those whom we have lost and our desire to find them again, in our sense of our own mortal frailty and the brief duration of earthly life, the celestial impulse which demands a life triumphant over death.

The strongest of all supports for peace on earth is the faith in immortality. There is nothing good or great that we think or feel or endeavour, that is not a reaching out to something better. Our finest knowledge is but the consciousness of limitation and the longing that it may be removed. Our best moral effort is but a slow advance towards something better. Our sense of the difference between good and evil, our penitence, our aspiration, all this moral freight with which our souls are laden, is a cargo consigned to an unseen country. Our bill of lading reads, "To the immortal life." If we must sink in mid-ocean, then all is lost, and the voyage of life is a predestined wreck.

The wisest, the strongest, the best of mankind, have felt this most deeply. The faith in immortality belongs to the childhood of the race, and the greatest of the sages have always returned to it and taken refuge in it. Socrates and Plato, Cicero and Plutarch, Montesquieu and Franklin, Kant and Emerson, Tennyson and Browning,—all bear witness to the incompleteness of life and reach out to a completion beyond the grave.

"No great Thinker ever lived and taught you
All the wonder that his soul received;
No great Painter ever set on canvas
All the glorious vision he conceived.

"No Musician ever held your spirit
Charmed and bound in his melodious chains;
But, be sure, he heard, and strove to render,
Feeble echoes of celestial strains.

"No real Poet ever wove in numbers
All his dream, but the diviner part,
Hidden from all the world, spake to him only
In the voiceless silence of his heart.

"So with Love: for Love and Art united
Are twin mysteries: different yet the same;
Poor indeed would be the love of any
Who could find its full and perfect name.

"Love may strive; but vain is its endeavour
All its boundless riches to unfold;

Still its tenderest, truest secret lingers
Ever in its deepest depths untold.

"Things of Time have voices: speak and perish.
Art and Love speak; but their words must be
Like sighings of illimitable forests
And waves of an unfathomable sea."

Can it be that death shall put the final seal of irretrievable ruin on all this uncompleted effort? Can it be that the grave shall whelm all this unuttered love in endless silence? What a wild waste of treasure, what a mad destruction of fair designs, what a failure, life would be if death must end all!

The very reasonableness of our nature, our sense of order, declare the impotence of Death to create such a wreck. And most of all our deep affections cry out against the conclusion of despair. They will not hear of dissolution. They reach out their hands into the darkness. They demand and they promise an unending fellowship, a deepening communion, a more perfect satisfaction. Do you remember what Thackeray wrote? "If love lives through all life, and survives through all sorrow; and remains steadfast with us through all changes; and in all darkness of spirit burns brightly; and if we die, deplores us for ever, and still loves

us equally; and exists with the very last gasp and throb of the faithful bosom, whence it passes with the pure soul beyond death, surely it shall be immortal. Though we who remain are separated from it, is it not ours in heaven? If we love still those whom we lose, can we altogether lose those whom we love?"

To deny this instinct is to deny that which lies at the very root of our life. If love perishes with death, then our affections are our curses, the world is a torture-house, and "all things work together for evil to those who love." Do you believe it? Is it possible? All that is best and noblest and purest within us rejects such a faith in Absolute Evil as the power that has created and rules the world. In the presence of love we feel that we behold that which must belong to a good God and therefore cannot die. Destruction cannot touch it. The grave cannot hold it. Loving and being loved, we dare to stand in the very doorway of the tomb, and assert the power of an endless life.

It seems to me that this courage never comes to us so fully as when we are brought in closest contact with death, when we are brought face to face with that dread shadow and forced either to deny its power, once and for ever, or to give up everything and die with our hopes. I wish

that I could make this clear to you as it lies in my own experience. Perhaps in trying to do it I should speak closer to your own heart than in any other way.

A flower grew in your garden. You delighted in its beauty and fragrance. It gave you all it had to give, but it did not love you. It could not. When the time came for it to die, you were sorry. But it did not seem to you strange or unnatural. There was no waste. Its mission was fulfilled. You understood why its petals should fall, its leaf wither, its root and branch decay. And even if a storm came and snapped it, still there was nothing lost that was indispensable, nothing that could not be restored.

A child grew in your household, dearly loved and answering your love. You saw that soul unfold, learning to know the evil from the good, learning to accept duty and to resist selfishness, learning to be brave and true and kind, learning to give you day by day a deeper and a richer sympathy, learning to love God and to pray and to be good. And then perhaps you saw that young heart being perfected under the higher and holier discipline of suffering, bearing pain patiently, facing trouble and danger like a hero, not shrinking even from the presence

of death, but trusting all to your love and God's, and taking just what came from day to day, from hour to hour. And then suddenly the light went out in the shining eyes. The brave heart stopped. The soul was gone. Lost, perished, blotted out for ever in the darkness of death? Ah, no; you know better than that. That clear, dawning intelligence, that deepening love, that childlike faith in God, that pure innocence of soul, did not come from the dust. How could they return thither? The music ceases because the instrument is broken. But the player is not dead. He is learning a better music. He is finding a more perfect instrument. It is impossible that he should be holden of death. God wastes nothing so precious.

This is what Emerson wrote after the death of his little son:

"What is excellent
As God lives is permanent.
Hearts are dust; hearts' loves remain.
Heart's love will meet thee again."

But I think we must go further than this in order to understand the full strength and comfort of the text. The assertion of the impotence of death to end all is based upon something deeper than the prophecy of immortality in the

human heart. It has a stronger foundation than the outreachings of human knowledge and moral effort towards a higher state in which completion may be attained. It has a more secure ground to rest upon than the deathless affection with which our love clings to its object. The impotence of death is revealed to us in the spiritual perfection of Christ.

Here then, in the "power of an endless life," I find the corner-stone of peace on earth among men of good-will. Take this mortal life as a thing of seventy years, more or less, to which death puts a final period, and you have nothing but confusion, chance and futility,—nothing safe, nothing realized, nothing completed. Evil often triumphs. Virtue often is defeated.

> *"The good die young,*
> *And we whose hearts are dry as summer dust*
> *Burn to the socket."*

But take death, as Christ teaches us, not as a full stop, but as only a comma in the story of an endless life, and then the whole aspect of our existence is changed. That which is material, base, evil, drops down. That which is spiritual, noble, good, rises to lead us on.

The conviction of immortality, the forward-looking faith in a life beyond the grave, the

spirit of Easter, is essential to peace on earth for three reasons.

I. It is the only faith that lifts man's soul, which is immortal, above his body, which is perishable. It raises him out of the tyranny of the flesh to the service of his ideals. It makes him sure that there are things worth fighting and dying for. The fighting and the dying, for the cause of justice and liberty, are sacrifices on the Divine altar which will never be forgotten.

II. The faith in immortality carries with it the assurance of a Divine reassessment of earth's inequalities. Those who have suffered unjustly here will be recompensed in the future. Those who have acted wickedly and unjustly here will be punished. Whether that punishment will be final or remedial we do not know. Perhaps it may lead to the extinction of the soul of evil, perhaps to its purifying and deliverance. On these questions I fall back on the word of God: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

III. The faith in immortality brings with it the sense of order, tranquillity, steadiness and courage in the present life. It sets us free from mean and cowardly temptations, makes it easier to resist the wild animal passions of lust and

greed and cruelty, brings us into eternal relations and fellowships, makes us partners with the wise and good of all the ages, ennobles our earthly patriotism by giving us a heavenly citizenship. Yea, it knits us in bonds of love with the coming generation. It is better than the fountain of youth. We shall know and see them as they go on their way, long after we have left the path. The faith in immortality sets a touch of the imperishable on every generous impulse and unselfish deed. It inspires to sublime and heroic virtues,—spiritual splendours,—deeds of sacrifice and suffering for which earth has no adequate recompense, but whose reward is great in heaven. Here is the patience of the saints, the glorious courage of patriots, martyrs, and confessors, something more bright and shining than secular morality can bring forth,—a flashing of the inward light which fails not, but grows clearer as death draws near. What noble evidences of this came to us out of the great war!

"Are you in great distress?" asked a nurse of an American soldier whose legs had been shot away on the battle-field. "I am in as great peace," said he, "through Jesus my Lord, as a man can possibly be, out of Paradise."

A secretary of the Y. M. C. A., the night

before he was killed, wrote to his father: "I have not been sent here to die: I am to fight: I offer my life for future generations; I shall not die, I shall merely change my direction. He who walks before us is so great that we cannot lose him from sight."

A simple French boy, grievously wounded, is dying in the ambulance. He is a Protestant. The nurse who bends over him is a Catholic sister. She writes down his words as they fall slowly from his lips: "O my God, let Thy will be done and not mine. O my God, Thou knowest that I never wished war, but that I have fought because it was Thy will; I offered my life so that peace might prevail. O my God, I pray for all my dear ones, . . . father, mother, brothers, sisters. Give a hundredfold to these nurses for all they have done for me. I pray for them one and all."

Here, in the midst of carnage and confusion, horror and death, was perfect peace, the triumph of immortality.

What then shall we say of the new teachers and masters who tell us that they are going to banish this outworn superstition and all others like it from the mind of man? They are going to make a new world in which men shall walk by sight, and not by faith; a world in which

there shall be neither nation, God, nor Church, nor anywhere a thought of any life but this which ends in the grave. It is a mad dream of wild and reckless men. But it threatens sorrow to all the world. And if these new tyrants of ignorance and unbelief have their way, the darkness will spread until the black cloud charged with death covers the face of the earth for a season with shame and anguish and destruction. A sane world, an orderly world, a peaceful world, can never be founded on materialism. That foundation is a quicksand in which all that is dearest to man goes down to death.

Religion is essential to true peace in the soul and to peace on earth through righteousness. Immortality is essential to true religion. Thanks be to God who hath given us Jesus Christ, who was dead and is alive again and liveth for evermore, to touch and ennoble, to inspire and console, to pacify and uplift our earthly existence with the power of an endless life.