

The Reality
of Religion

Van Dyke

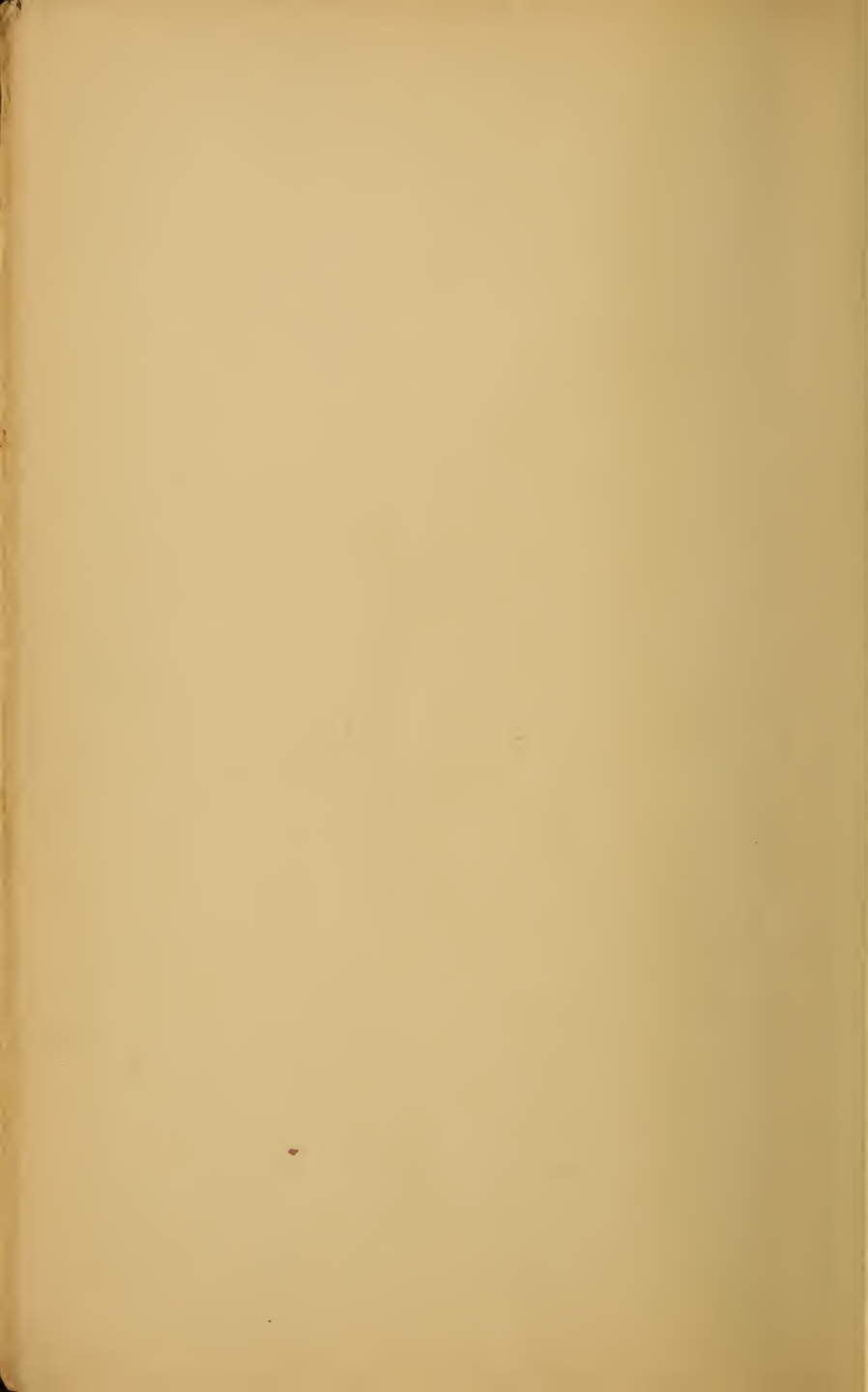
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THE REALITY OF RELIGION.

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REALITY OF RELIGION

BY
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*Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est
cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te.*
St. Aug. Conf. i. i.



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PREFACE.

AMID the strife of systems and the war of words our souls are thirsting for the living God. We long to find and know Him, to touch Him with the outstretched hands of faith and love, to feel Him drawing near to us and filling the dry cisterns of our lives with the sweet, clear waters of Divine communion. Even as one who has wandered long in the desert yearns and pants for the flowing spring, so our heart and flesh cry out for God.

After all, this is the deepest need of humanity. This is what we desire most ardently: not so much the proof of theories and the unfolding of doctrines; not so much the criticism of Scripture and the triumphant vindication of certain forms of belief; not so much the development of more elaborate modes of worship and church government, or the return to a more primitive simplicity; not anything in the world do we

desire so much as to come into close and living contact with that Perfect and Eternal Spirit in whom our souls must find their only rest.

We do not sneer at the dogmas of theology. They are certainly as important as the dogmas of science. We do not despise the questions of ritual. They are at least of equal consequence with the questions of social order. But *religion* is infinitely beyond all these. It is more vital and more profound. It does not appeal to the intellect alone. It is not satisfied with the conclusions of logic. Nor does it rest at ease upon the æsthetic sense. It reaches down into the very depths of the living, throbbing human heart, and stirs a longing which nothing outward and formal can ever still, — *the longing for personal fellowship with God.*

Yet I cannot help feeling that a great part of our religious life comes far short of this. We play with forms and symbols ; we repeat creeds and prayers ; we let others do our thinking and feeling for us,

and then vainly strive to lift ourselves, by an effort of the will, to the height of their experience. Is it not true? Has it never come over you like a shadow of gloom? Have you never sat in the church, — your eyes delighted with the solemnities of arch and window, — your ears thrilled with the rushing music of great psalms, — but your heart empty and sad, yearning for something more and better, without which all the rest is but a hollow dream? Have you never followed with painful care the course of some intense theological controversy, linking your mind with the tempered steel of closest argument to the right conclusion, and then asked at the end, “But where is my God?”

Surely there must be something more than forms, either of worship or of belief. There must be *realities*, which we can feel and know in the innermost recesses of our spiritual life. And if we can once touch these and hold them fast, then our souls will be satisfied, and we shall not be greatly moved. The lesser conflict may long con-

tinue; the strife about modes and degrees, the controversies of doctrine and ritual, may pass like storms across the world, but we who have touched the realities can wait in patience and in peace, as those who have entered into rest and victory even in the midst of conflict.

I believe that there are men and women of every class and creed, scattered throughout the world, who have felt, with pain and hunger of heart, this craving for reality in religion. And to them, as to unknown friends, to whom I am bound by the secret tie of a common need and a common hope, I send out this little book.

It was written from the heart, and perhaps this may help it to find its way to the heart. It has no reference to points of temporary interest or transient dispute. It does not attempt to defend an old theology. Nor does it profess to teach a new theology. For I think that it matters little whether a theology be new or old; the one thing needful is that it should be real and true. And this I am sure of, that

the life of Moses and David and Isaiah and Paul and John, — the life which throbs and burns with “unquenchèd fire,” in every page of the Bible histories, — the life that was filled to overflowing with the conscious presence of God, is the highest and best life ever reached by man. It is the same in every age: ever old and ever new. And the secret of it lies in *the reality of religion.*

No one can see the defects and shortcomings of this book more clearly than I do. And certainly no one else can regret them so much. Many things have been touched but briefly and imperfectly; many thoughts have failed, and could not help failing, to find such expression in words as should make them clear and luminous; and much of what is best and deepest has been left untouched. Writing to-day in a very lonely place, far away from the noise and talk of the world, with the everlasting hills looking down in silent majesty upon me, I feel that human language cannot utter the deep things of God and the soul.

But if this book, with all its imperfections, shall find its way to one heart that wants it, — *if it shall bring help and strength to one of my fellow-men who is striving to enter into the realities of spiritual life, its purpose will be accomplished and its reward abundant.*

It would be impossible in a work of this character to make acknowledgment of all my obligations for thoughts and illustrations. But I cannot forbear to mention my profound indebtedness to the “University Sermons” of Canon Liddon, the “Theological Essays” of Mr. Richard Holt Hutton, Professor Robert Flint’s “Theism,” and Dr. W. G. T. Shedd’s “Sermons to the Spiritual Man.”

SARANAC LAKE,
August, 1884.

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I.

A REAL RELIGION NECESSARY.

I.

ST. JOHN iv. 24. *God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*

THIS text is central. It is a starting-point from which we may set out to explore many regions of truth. It is a converging point at which many lines of experience and reasoning come together. It is a polar point, fixed, immovable, secure, by which we may correct our reckonings and lay out our courses, even as that pale, cold star in heaven, which ever keeps the same place and about which the greater and the lesser lights are wheeling,—even as the steadfast north star is the corrector of all compasses and the mariner's constant guide over the trackless waste of waters.

And yet this text was first spoken to an

unknown and ignorant woman who had come to draw water from a wayside well. She was not wise, she was not cultured, she was not high-minded. She was not even one of the chosen people of God. She was as common and dull a soul as you might have found in the poor Samaritan city of Sychar. Yet to her this sublime and central truth was first uttered from the lips of Christ; proving that God is sovereign in his revelations, enlightening whom He will, and having no respect of persons. And by her it was received; proving that the simplest human soul is adapted to the reception of the heavenly light, which needs but the open heart to flow in, bringing fullness of wisdom and eternal life.

Look closely at this verse, I pray you, before we enter upon the course of thought which is to engage us for a little while. We are about to study the reality of religion. We want to reach the essence of it; to pierce through the outer shell; to lay aside all uncertainties and shams and illusions, — yes, to lay aside even those things

which, while true and genuine in themselves, are yet secondary and non-essential, and, if it be possible, to stand face to face with the naked facts; to strip away all ornaments and trivialities, and with open eyes, reverently but clearly, behold the real life of the soul in its relation to God, laying hold with firm and true grasp on "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The substance, not the shadow. No mere form, nor theory, nor idea, but *the reality* of religion.

Here, then, is our point of departure. This word of the world's Teacher, clear, luminous, unmistakable, spoken so simply and naturally in the course of a roadside talk with a stranger, and yet reaching down in the profundity of its meaning to the very bottom depth of thought, — this word is more than worthy to stand at the beginning of our meditations. For it declares unto us that which we are seeking, — God, the human soul, the real and living tie which joins them. And all our reasoning beyond this will be but the verifying and

unfolding of Christ's sublime utterance in the light of other facts and other rays of revelation.

But, for the present, we must mark most carefully the spirit and purpose in which these words were spoken. Jesus of Nazareth, weary and thirsty, is sitting beside the well of Jacob, just outside the city of Sychar. A woman comes to draw water. He asks her for a drink. But He desires something more than He asks for. He is thirsting for the salvation of this poor woman's soul; and so He makes His simple request for a draught of water the occasion of a conversation upon higher themes, to which He leads the way as skilfully and courteously as if He were speaking to a princess. He introduces the subject of religion.

How does she meet it? She imagines that she is already a religious person. And doubtless, in a certain sense, she is. She has a creed, she has a church, she says her prayers. But the first thought which rises in her mind at the mention of religion is the difference between His creed, as a Jew, and

hers, as a Samaritan. She descends instantly upon the fact that He worships in one Temple, she in another. She touches at once, with a firm and conflict-seeking hand, upon the great standing quarrel between His people and hers. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." This, chiefly, is what religion means to her; an outward form, a visible worship, a sacred locality, a bitter enmity against all who hold a different tradition of the true place and mode of divine service. And is it not natural for her to feel thus? Doubtless the controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans is the religious topic which she has heard discussed most frequently. Doubtless she has been taught to rest with confidence upon the superiority of Mount Gerizim to Mount Zion, and content her soul with the scrupulous observance of those forms and feasts which her people regarded as essential to the true religion. She cannot understand the need or the possibility of learning anything about

religion from a man whose fathers worshipped in Jerusalem.

But Christ sweeps away all this as the wind sweeps a mist from the mountain. This is unsubstantial and unreal. This question of modes and places, this strife between Gerizim and Zion, will vanish in the coming years like a wraith of vapor. If religion were no more than this it would be a vain thing, — empty, worthless, perishing; not a spring of living water, but a shimmering mirage at which no soul could ever truly quench its thirst. Behind all visible forms, beneath all outward appearances, lies the reality of religion, — the living intercourse of the living soul with the living God. Worship is the embodiment; but, without the vital spark, worship is only a body, a puppet, a corpse, a mockery. *For God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*

This was what the woman of Samaria in her foolish blindness, in her dull content with a mere sham of a religion, needed to learn. And this is what we also, in this age

of shams, when there is so much talk on the surface and so little thought in the depths, need to learn and to remember, for the peace and welfare of our souls. Shall we shrink from the pain and labor of the lesson? Would you rather dwell in the careless ease of a traditional creed and a formal worship, and hear your chosen preacher speak pleasantly of indifferent themes, or draw bright pictures of Scripture heroes, or justify with ponderous argument the claims of your ecclesiastical Mount Gerizim against all the mountains of the other sects? When the air is filled with sneers and scoffs and questions, when men treat Christianity with polite contempt as a modern scientist might treat a ghost, when they say to you, coarsely or courteously as the case may be, "After all, your religion is only a dream," will you reply, as some have done, "Well, if it be a dream I pray you do not waken me"?

Nay, if it be a dream, — if these precious hopes, these aspirations and yearnings of the soul, these consolations of faith, this

Father's hand touching ours in the darkness, this Saviour's face shining through the gloom of death, this hell to shun, this blessed heaven to win, — if this be all a dream, then I pray God, if there be a God, or any power, benign or baleful, above our human life, waken me! Yes, though the thunderbolt shatter my fancied bliss forever. Yes, though the lightning-flash of truth sear my brain to the quick, — *waken me!* For the soul sunk in dreams is lost even here. I will not waste my only life in visions. Better a dreadful truth than the sweetest lie. I will give a whole world of golden dreams for just one handful of reality.

But is this attainable? Is it possible for us ever to find in the sphere of religion anything so clear and firm and tangible that we can lay hold of it with positive assurance, as we grasp the trunk of a tree, as we record a fact of history, as we formulate a law of science, and say, "This is real, this we touch, this we know, it cannot be shaken"?

Here, you see, is the question, — a ques-

tion which does not merely divide atheists from theists, and infidels from believers, but rises also within the ranks of faith, and separates the professed defenders of Christianity into two great classes. On the one side are those who regard religion as a matter of theory, logical, consistent, defensible, but entirely separate in its proofs and methods from the ordinary sphere of our intellectual and practical life. On the other side are those who regard religion as a matter of fact, substantial, actual, undeniable, entering into the life of man with a presence as real and tangible as the perceptions of our senses or the laws of science and society. On which side shall we take our stand? Which view of religion shall we adopt? How shall we regard our faith? As a power which supposes, and imagines, and acts as if certain things were true? Or as a power which actually brings us into vital contact with realities?

Certainly, for my own part, I cannot but accept the latter view. There is no rest for my soul anywhere else. Nor is there

rest for any one who truly desires and seeks, *the truth* save in the finding and grasping of it. It is my hope to be able to show that the only religion worth having is a religion that deals with realities, and that this is attainable for every one who earnestly strives after it. The attempt to do this will lead us to take up in succession the great factorial ideas of Christianity, — God, the human soul, revelation, atonement, holiness, communion, the future life,— and look them fairly in the face, trying to discern their reality.

But, before we do this, there are certain preliminary questions in regard to which we ought to have a clear understanding. What is meant by reality in religion? What are the marks and dangers of unreality in religion? What makes it absolutely necessary for our souls to have a real religion?

I. By reality in religion we do not mean that its facts, relations, and experiences are of a corporeal nature, and can be reduced to terms of matter and force. We do not

mean that the face of God can be seen materially, or that his voice can be heard with the outward ear, as we see the face and hear the voice of a friend. We do not mean that religion is a literal and physical touching of Him. For, even if this were possible, it would not be the highest kind of reality. Such a religion would be phenomenal: that is to say, it would be a matter of appearances addressed to the bodily senses; and the first lesson of philosophy is that these senses often and grievously deceive us.

Appearances are not realities. Far from it. The little child sees the rainbow glittering against the skirts of the departing storm. It seems to him a solid and tangible arch, and he runs to find the place where its golden pillars rest upon the earth. But they vanish before him. Is the rainbow, then, unreal? Not so; but the reality is hidden behind the shining bow of many colors. It is in the unseen sunbeam refracted in the last crystal drops of the passing shower. That which appears is delu-

sive. It is only by a larger experience and a higher knowledge that the child reaches the reality.

And so there are many real and true things which are not visible to the senses even by an image or reflection. Love, gratitude, virtue, hope, — who has ever touched or seen these things? Yet they are so real that compared with them the whole round globe often seems to us like an unsubstantial bubble.

When a man says to me, "If your religion is real, show me your God," I answer, "If your doubt is real, show me your mind."

On the other hand, by reality in religion we do not mean merely sincerity of conviction in the heart of the believer. There is much foolish talk in this direction. Men speak as if honesty of belief were the only thing to be demanded, and profess an equal reverence for all religious creeds, on the ground that whatever a man accepts candidly, with his whole soul, is for him the truth.

But, surely, to talk thus is a mere juggling with words. For though a million men may believe sincerely that Mahomet's coffin hangs suspended in mid-air, this does not make it true. No intensity of conviction can lend reality to an illusion, or make a dream substantial and abiding. As well might we imagine that the fancy of the child can give a body to the rainbow's vanishing pillars, as that the faith of a man can make his religion real.

What we are seeking is something deeper than phenomena, something more substantial than sincerity. It is the actual existence of facts on which religion is based: powers, relations, experiences in human life which cannot be explained without religion, and to which the contents of our faith and worship correspond as the image in the glass answers to the object which is reflected. They do not depend for their existence upon our beholding them. They are independent, self-existent, everlasting. They are the unseen realities of the spiritual world through which we are walking every

moment. They are close about us. They press upon us. When we are conscious of them, when we recognize them, when we live in them and for them, then our religion is real.

II. Here, then, we have the standard by which we can discern the marks and measure the dangers of unreality in our religious life. The willingness to rest content, either with dreams or with traditions, provided they are good and pleasant; the shrinking from all serious and searching inquiry; the separation of faith and worship from the sphere of every-day life; the keeping of religion secluded in a dreamy and secret place of the soul as in a garden enclosed, — all these are signs of a tendency towards the unreal. And these we may discover not only in the Christian world at large, but also more or less clearly in our own hearts.

If we look for the causes of this tendency, we shall find one of them, and that not the least important, in the spirit of the age, which exalts the human reason as the

absolute monarch in the realm of religion. It makes man the measure of all things. It depreciates the objective reality and exaggerates the subjective process. According to this philosophy all wisdom proceeds from man, all truth is conditioned by his perception of it, and all religious truth is either formed or created by the human mind. Thus the doctrines of Christianity are only "the successive evolutions or incrustations of human thought," and faith has really no higher authority than that which it derives from the consent of men. There are professed Christian thinkers who virtually take this ground. They say that this authority is enough. They say that nothing higher is within reach. They say, we can never touch the realities; all we can do is to take them for granted; act as if they were true, and this will give us a religion which is good enough for any man, since it will supply the great need, namely, a system of rules for the regulation of the spiritual and practical life.

At this point, however, the defenders of

an hypothetical religion divide into two schools.

On the one side are the ceremonialists, who hold that the first necessity of man's life is an orderly and beautiful form of worship. They bid us frequent the church, and say our prayers, and bow in lowly reverence before the altar: we cannot, indeed, be sure that any God is there; but the sweet and gracious exercises of devotion will do us good in any case, will uplift and purify our souls with holy visions.

On the other side are the moralists, who hold that the first necessity is a righteous and charitable life. They say: "Suppose God. Suppose that this is His law. You cannot be absolutely certain about it, but you can suppose it. Now set yourself to live according to this law. Be upright, honest, kind, and you will find that in the keeping of it there is great reward."

Now it is undoubtedly very easy for us to fall into one or the other of these outward semblances of religion, and persuade ourselves that it is sufficient. How much

easier to repeat prayers and sing hymns than really to wrestle in the darkness with that mysterious Power who must be either our Saviour or our Destroyer! How much easier to conform to a fixed and partial rule of conduct, to observe times and seasons; to give regularly to certain charities, to avoid gross vices and outbreking sins, than really to bring the sacrifice of the whole heart to the living God and bind ourselves to follow the living Christ whithersoever He may lead us!

Easier, — aye, but is it better? Is there any reality in these forms, to satisfy the heart? Are they not vain and hollow and worthless? Do they not mock our hunger, giving us a stone when we ask for bread? Do they not verily hinder and delude us, with their false and paltry promises, from that which alone can deeply satisfy us? For if there be anything higher and better for us, if there be any Father's house with its divine love and real communion, then surely every day, every hour, spent among the husks is a waste and a sin, — a

sin against Him who is yearning to receive us into His fellowship, — a sin against our own souls, which can never be contented with the forms, but only with the reality, of religion.

III. There is an absolute spiritual necessity in man's heart demanding *that which is real*, to feed its deepest cravings. Nothing less will answer. A dream, a makeshift, an hypothesis, a theory is not enough. It is powerless to create either a genuine morality or a sincere worship. "For we can no more obey or adore that which we suspect to be the mere creation of the human mind, than we can knowingly adore or obey the carved and painted workmanship of human hands." Take away reality and what is left but an idol?

Look at the case fairly. I come to you asking for that which shall guide me into a right and holy life. You present me with the Bible. You say: "Take this book. It may not be altogether true. It may not have any divine authority behind it. It may be largely, perhaps entirely, the

work of men like yourself. But take it, and follow it, and you shall pass in safety through the perilous waters of the sea of life."

Do you not see that you have denied my request, while seeming to grant it? Do you not see that you have taken away the only thing which could give your religion any value, or any power over my life? For surely I cannot be content to steer my course by a possible falsehood; to follow blindly a thread which may lead me anywhere or nowhere. I demand some assurance better than your guess, some reality, something substantial and palpable. "I had rather be wrecked against one really discovered rock; I had rather founder in the attempt to sound my own 'dim and perilous way,' than be constantly obeying directions which are a mere accommodation to my ignorance, and which will leave me in the end utterly without knowledge of the real world in which I live." More than this we must have. We want a divine law, a word of God, saying to us: *This is right,*

now and forever; this do and thou shalt live. We want a Divine Example, a living and eternal Righteousness, to which we can look up and aspire. We want a true light; not a glimmering will-o'-the-wisp, but a fixed and shining star, by which we can direct our way in safety and in confidence.

Or again, I come to you with my soul full of penitence and hope and great desire, longing to worship. You say to me: "Well, you shall be satisfied. Here is a temple. Here are songs of praise and forms of prayer. Here are ideas and symbols of the Divine, a priest and multitudes of worshippers. Bow down and join in adoration. What more can you desire?"

What more can I desire? *My God.*

He who made me, and made me for Himself: He who alone is perfect and eternal, alone worthy to be worshipped: He who as a dream is nothing to me, as a reality everything, — He it is whom I seek. And until I find Him there is no rest. Into His presence I must come. His glory must

shine upon my soul. Not the light of your sacred candle and holy lamps, but the light of His face: not the theories of His goodness and the ideas of His mercy, but His living love must flow into my heart. I must know that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Then His law will bind me ; His goodness will comfort me ; His grace will bless me. Then faith and penitence and prayer and worship will satisfy me ; for then, and only then, they will be the supreme realities of my life.



II.

THE LIVING GOD.

II.

ACTS xiv. 15. *The living God.*

Is God real?

This is the question of the ages.

Four philosophers are discussing it together. The first says, "There is no God." This is the atheist, whose folly has been condemned alike by inspired Scripture and by modern science.

The second says, "I cannot tell whether there is a God or not, and therefore I do not think about it." This is the agnostic, who makes his doubts the limit of his knowledge, and exalts the confession of short-sightedness into the first of the virtues.

The third says, "I cannot be sure that God is, nor what He is; but I think He is thus and so, and I act upon this supposition." This is the man who is willing to

go beyond what he sees, who loves his hopes so much that he treats them as if they were facts, who is content with probabilities and turns them to the regulation of his practical life.

The fourth says, "God is. I know Him." This is the apostle of religion, who declares unto us that which he has heard, that which he has seen with his eyes, that which he has looked upon and his hands have handled of the word of life: that God is light, — manifest, actual, real, as the sun in heaven.

I need not waste time in proving that this last man is the only one of the four who has the Bible on his side, for surely if anything is plain in regard to this book it is this: that it teaches the existence of a living and personal Deity, who may be really known by His creatures. But we cannot pause here. We must go back of this. We have to ask which of these four philosophers has the facts on his side; which of them is resting, not on illusions and dreams, but on the solid ground of reality.

In regard to the first of these four men, we see that he stands alone; and there is probably no danger that any of us will be inclined to stand with him, for he is in the difficult position of having to prove a positive by negatives. Admitting that all arguments for the existence of God are failures, the atheist must go beyond this, and bring facts to show that God is impossible. He must sweep the universe from end to end, and show that it is empty. He must prove, not only that an effect may exist without a cause, but also that the sum of all effects cannot possibly have had a cause, and that nowhere in heaven or earth is there a lurking-place in which an unexplained and primal power can dwell. With this task we may leave him, like a foolish builder trying to reach the skies with a tower of brick, and pass on to the other and wiser men.

We observe at once that the second and third stand together in theory, though they differ in practice. They are both professors of ignorance. They admit the idea of God,

but they cannot discover the reality. Therefore the second says that he will have nothing to do with it. He has no need of it, and can get nothing from it save perplexity and humiliation. But the third declares it is so bright and beautiful that he will worship it and make it the guide of his life. So they part company, and the former becomes a famous teacher of science, and the latter a popular preacher of Christianity.

Now, in regard to their common view, one thing, it seems to me, is clear. It is at bottom unreasonable. For if there were surely no God at all, then it would be naturally impossible for us to find traces of Him. But the very possibility of God, the may-be of His existence, carries with it the necessity of some kind of manifestation. If He is in the universe, it cannot be as a mere abstraction or impotent idea; there must be evidences of His being and power. In other words, the very idea of God requires reality for its perfection; and this truth has been developed by philosophers of highest standing into what is called the

ontological argument for the existence of God.

We have, therefore, an antecedent probability in favor of the fourth view; and he who declares that God is real and can be known has, at the very outset, a kind of reasonable supposition on his side. But certainly this is far from being complete and satisfactory. It is far from being enough for our present purpose; for we have agreed to make our appeal to facts. We are not dealing with abstract arguments and rational probabilities; we are searching for an actual and concrete reality. Evidence, contact, experience, — this is the sphere in which we are moving. It is the sphere of our every-day life, our practical discoveries, our human emotions. And here, I say, in this very sphere of reality, we do not see light, we do not know gravitation, we do not feel love, one whit more really than we experience the living God.

It is not an argument; it is not a theory; it is not a leap from the region of the known into the region of the unknown; it is not

the supreme conclusion of a special and unquestionable religious faculty. But to man as man, in the best exercise of the faculties which are joined in the unity of his personality, the living Divine Being is *manifest*, as a physical reality, as a moral reality, as an historical reality, as a spiritual reality.

I. The world is full of God. He is immanent in the universe. Lift up your eyes, stretch out your hands. He is near you, on every side of you. You touch not His substance, for that is intangible, but the force that flows from Him. You see, not His face, for that is invisible, but the glory that clothes and hides His presence. He is here as really and truly as the light, the gravity, the electricity which fill this room though you cannot see them. Do you question their reality? They are formless, they are invisible, they are actually unknown to millions of mankind who ignorantly experience their effects without seeking or discovering their real nature; but you are sure of them; you know them; they are

manifested to you by their workings. So God is manifested in the world.

We may say that there are three forms in which this manifestation comes to us, — three forms under which we may include all appearances and relations of material things, — three great realities, in each of which the living soul is God. Power, wisdom, beauty — in these three forms we experience God.

Look at these mighty forces which permeate and encircle our globe, binding earth and rocks into a solid mass, hurrying waves of the sea and currents of rivers in their swift flow, submerging islands and upheaving continents, driving the clouds in flocks and armies, sending forth arrows of lightnings, marshalling the stars in their journeying hosts. Do not all these tell us of a living spring and fountain of force? Exalt their power and order as you will; define their nature; trace their method and relations; show how they play one into another; bind them all together into a coördinated system. Still they must have a

source. Still they bear witness to a Power unknown ; nay, to a Power known, in and through them, since they flow from Him.

The heathen of old saw in a lightning flash a thunderbolt hurled by the hand of Jupiter, and trembled. We call it an effect of electricity. But what is electricity but an effluence of an Almighty Will ? And do we not still tremble when the bright shaft leaps from the black quiver of cloud, and the rattling thunder tells of an oak riven or a house shattered ? Aye, in the presence of great power, — earth-shaking, heaven-riving, death-dealing, life-unfolding forces, before which we are as insects blown on the summer wind, we tremble and bow down, for our heart tells us that a Greater than man is here.

But consider, again, how wonderfully these great forces, and the material substances which they are incessantly moving and changing, are adapted to the production of certain definite and desirable results. Men may deny that the term *design* is properly applicable to the processes of nature. They

may say that we have no right to reason with Paley from the analogy of a watch and a watch-maker to a world and a world-maker. But whether this be true or not, I think no intelligent person can fail to see in the universe that which in any human production we should call *wisdom*, though on a scale so much more vast, and of a quality so much higher and more perfect than our own, that we can never hope to rival it, but only wonder and adore. How intricate and majestic is the combination of forces which keeps the heavens balanced and in order, steadies the spinning globe on its axis and guides it on its appointed orbit, ensuring the beneficent returns of day and night, winter and summer, seed-time and harvest. How skilful and exact is the construction of the eye, framed expressly to receive the beating waves of light, and, without changing its place, capable of conveying to the brain the image of a flower in the hand or a star in the sky. How wonderful and admirable is even such a trifle as a sea-shell found on the shore : —

“ Frail, but a work divine,
Made so fairly well,
With delicate spire and whorl,
A miracle of design, —
Slight; to be crushed with a tap
Of my finger-nail on the sand, —
Frail, but of force to withstand,
Year upon year, the shock
Of cataract seas that snap
The three-decker’s oaken spine
Athwart the ledges of rock.”

Surely when we behold these things we know that a Wiser than man is here.

And then, the beauty of it all! the strange and mystic splendor that gleams from the face of the world, filling our hearts with gladness and with worship! Whence is this derived? If the universe were but a vast machine, as some would teach us to believe, — a lifeless thing of forces and substances, wheels and cogs and bands playing into each other and producing mechanically certain fixed results, — what power could it have to touch our spirits? Why should our hearts leap up when we behold a rainbow in the sky? It is but the refraction of certain rays of light in certain drops

of water. An orchard in the spring-time, covered with its rosy snow of blossoms ; a field of golden grain waving in the soft wind of summer ; a grape-vine with its trailing branches, and dark, rich clusters of fruit hanging motionless in the still autumnal air ; a winter forest with its smooth white carpet, and its net-work of crystal boughs and glittering pendants of ice shining overhead, — these are but chemical effects, the natural results of the changes of the seasons. Why should they be so lovely ? Surely the grain, the fruit, the snow, could have been produced just as well without beauty. Why is it that they touch and thrill and uplift the soul ? What is the meaning and the spiritual presence of which they speak to us ? Who has informed them with this gracious splendor ? Let the answer come in the magnificent words of the poet's Hymn at Sunrise in the Valley of Chamouni : —

“ Ye ice-falls ! ye that from the mountain's brow
A down enormous ravines slope amain, —
Who made you glorious as the gates of Heaven

Beneath the keen, full moon? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows? Who with living flowers
Of loveliest blue spread garlands at your feet?
GOD! let the torrents like a shout of nations
Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, GOD!
GOD! sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice,—
Ye pine-groves with your soft and soul-like sounds!
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God!"

Yea! He it is whose presence makes the world alive with beauty: He it is whose vision thrills us when we know it not. His smile brightens the outgoings of the morning: His voice sounds from the murmuring forest and the rushing cataract and the loud-roaring, multitudinous ocean billows: His garments of glory gleam before us in the lingering hues of sunset. In every form of beauty and scene of splendor we behold the presence of God. And this presence, we say, is a reality: it exists for us as truly as the light which enables us to see, or the heat which enables us to live. Power, wisdom, beauty,—these are no dreams, but the actual manifestations, in the physical world, of the living God.

II. In the moral world we touch Him yet more closely: He reveals Himself to us as a person: He puts His hand upon us and we feel His power.

Here, we are standing in another world from that which is known to our senses. Absolutely and totally different from the feelings of awe, wonder, or delight at the things which are seen and heard and handled, is the sentiment of moral obligation, the distinction between right and wrong, the voluntary movement of the soul under the laws of good and evil. No external force, no law of nature, no command of man can create that which we call *duty*; and yet it is a reality, which we cannot question or change. It presses upon us more closely and resistlessly than any other power. It cannot be escaped or evaded. It follows us, seizes us, binds us. The consciousness that among the paths which are open to my choice there is one that I *ought* to follow and one that I *ought* to avoid, that among the actions of my life there are those that are right and those that

are wrong, the sense of obligation, the voice of conscience crying in the secret place "Thou shalt not do this thing, for it is evil," or "Thou shalt do this, for it is good," — nothing in the universe is more real to me than this, and in this I touch God.

He it is that calls me and commands me and binds me. He it is that reveals to me this world within the world, and summons me to live aright. He it is that hath "beset me behind and before, and laid His hand upon me." "Whither shall I go from His presence? If I climb up into Heaven He is there; if I go down into Hell He is there also." The universe is filled with His voice, saying, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not."

But, mark you, there is no constraint laid upon me. My will is free. I can, I must, choose for myself between good and evil. And here is the wonder of it; here is the manifest presence of the living God. For if the moral law were natural and impersonal, it would bind us resistlessly as gravity or electricity, as the thousand forces which

move us hither and thither in the ordinary courses of our lives without our will. But here, at the very moment when the loftiest interests of our being are at stake, at the turning where the fate of the soul must be decided, when we are conscious that the issues of life and death hang in the balance of our action, — at this moment the compulsion is withdrawn, the way is open, the will is left at liberty to choose the right or to reject it. But is the presence of Him who has revealed to us the difference between good and evil withdrawn? Nay, not so; but now most clearly manifest and felt; for He is warning us as a Father warns his child; He is watching us. Bending down above us with an infinite and tender solicitude He waits and longs to see us choose the good and reject the evil. We feel His eye upon us. “Thou God seest me.” You cannot escape it! you cannot deny it! This trembling of your soul at the thought of wrong, this drawing of your will towards the right, this joy of your heart in the consciousness of good, — this is the

sense of the reality of God, touching you in your moral life.

III. But again, we find God in the world as an historical reality. Just as we know the reality of the Persian, or the Grecian, or the Roman empires by their records on stone or parchment, by the results which they have accomplished and the traces which they have left in the world, so we know that God is a reality by the records and results of His dealings with men. In the experience of mankind His will is the chief factor; and if you take that away, if you deny all traces of a supreme, overruling, beneficent Providence in the affairs of men, the history of the world becomes an inexplicable and monstrous fable. How has the race been preserved in numberless perils and advanced through incessant difficulties; how have human industry and knowledge and character been unfolded and developed; how, amid the crash of falling empires and the dust of ruined civilization, wars and floods and earthquakes and revolutions, have learning and virtue been kept alive and

nurtured and increased, and the happiness of humanity enlarged year by year and century by century; how has the world been guided on a course which, with all its windings, leads surely upward,—if it be not by the indwelling and inworking of an almighty and allwise Governor? God in history is a reality.

And more than this, we have the actual record of His special dealings with certain men and nations,—records which cannot be ignored or explained away. We have no reason and no right to doubt them. The Bible is a history,—a history of men and of God. As the traveller passes through the rugged defiles of Sinai, and sees the inscriptions graven upon the rocks, he says, “The Edomites, the Romans, the Arabs have been here.” So, as we turn the pages of the Holy Scriptures, the handwriting of divine power and wisdom tells us that God has been here. He has revealed Himself to Abraham and Moses, Elijah and David. He has manifested His omnipotence in the deliverance and preservation and guidance of His chosen

people Israel. Above all, He has shined forth clearly in the person and life of Jesus Christ. This supreme and abiding personality, evidently superhuman, standing all the tests of criticism, refusing to be resolved into a myth or a dream, the most potent and permanent figure in all history, — this divine-human Master and Saviour of men, real and living through all the ages, — is to us the unshaken evidence of the reality of God. When we see Him we see the Father, for He and the Father are one.

IV. But one more realm remains for us to explore: but one more region of human life in which we must feel after God if haply we may find Him. And here, indeed, He is not far from every one of us. In the spiritual life, the deep and secret exercise of the soul's highest powers, the life of faith and hope and love and prayer, we meet and touch the living God. No mere vision of distempered sleep was that strange and awful experience of the patriarch Jacob, by the ford of Jabbok's stream. It was a reality; the contact of the human spirit

with the Divine; the wrestling of the human soul with God, so real and close that it leaves its marks upon the body and the mind forever. Yes, He does come to us and lay hold of us; He does speak to us and answer us, — this unseen, eternal, living One, before whose presence our hearts tremble and adore. In the dark, silent hours of the night, in the glaring noonday, in the crowded assembly of worshippers, in the solitude of our chambers, He is with us and we feel Him. When the tide of penitence sweeps over the soul, and we are humbled in the dust crying for pardon, have we not felt the touch of His forgiving hand laid upon us in secret? Have we not cast ourselves in faith upon Him whom we see not, as one who leaps into the darkness, and found our Father's everlasting arms encircling, embracing, bearing us up? Have we not pleaded with Him in prayer, and known of a surety that He hears us, because the answer has come into our hearts? Have we not sought guidance and found it, and cried for help and received it? Have

we not held communion with Him in secret, and felt the influences of His spirit moving with sweet and sacred compulsion upon our own? Who is it that has delivered our souls in great temptation, — and forgiven our sins in the midst of our anguish, — and spoken peace to the storm that swept our bosoms, — and wiped away the tears from our eyes in the deepest sorrow? God! our God!

O tell me that this most vast and excellent universe is an airy vision, that all things seen and heard are a delusion, that life itself is but a dream, — but never tell me that God is not real! For the one reality beyond all doubt is He who pardons my sins and upholds my spirit, comforts my grief and lights the star of my hope, — He in whom I live and move and have my being, — the living and true God.

III.

THE LIVING SOUL.

III.

GENESIS ii. 7. *And man became a living soul.*

GOD being a reality, what are we who know Him?

Realities, doubtless, for the man never lived who could honestly question his own existence. But of what nature? Are we mirrors of sensation, reflecting passively the gleams of the Divine glory; strings of an Æolian harp vibrating beneath the effluences of Divine power; cunningly devised mechanisms of bone and blood, muscle and nerve? or are we something more? God is a spirit. This we know. But what is man?

If we refer this question directly to the Bible, the answer is plain, straightforward, and immediate. Man is a living soul, brought into existence by the inbreathing of the Divine life and inhabiting a body

framed by the Divine wisdom and power. He is a spiritual creature, with supersensual powers, related most intimately to God, and by virtue of that relation destined to an everlasting existence. He dwells in the material universe ; he is bound to a physical organism, by means of which his sensations are received and his volitions exercised ; he is subjected, thus far, to the laws of matter and force ; but he himself is not to be identified with the things which are seen and heard and felt ; he is of another substance ; his life is independent and indestructible ; he is an immortal spirit. Thus the Bible teaches ; and we who believe that the Bible is an inspired book, accept this teaching and rest upon it with an implicit faith.

There is a substantial reality in this doctrine, and we do not by any means consent to abandon it, or set it aside as insufficient. It is the reality of a well-attested and unshaken revelation. But we are seeking now for something more than this. We are looking for the confirmation of this truth, which

is revealed to us on such high authority, in human nature and experience. We are questioning man himself, as he actually exists in the world, — a living, sentient, intelligent being ; and we demand an answer in accord with the facts as they are found in the consciousness of every one of us, an answer which shall bring us face to face with the clear and indubitable reality.

I. What is man ? A famous scientific lecturer recently gave a striking illustration of his view of this question. He reduced a human body by chemical analysis to its component parts. He presented to his audience twenty-three pounds of carbon, two pounds of lime, twenty-two ounces of phosphorus, about one ounce each of sodium, iron, potassium, magnesium, and silicon ; and apologized for not exhibiting some five thousand cubic feet of oxygen, one hundred thousand cubic feet of hydrogen, and fifty-two cubic feet of nitrogen gas. These substances, he said, were what went to the making of a man.

Is that all ? Do you believe it ? This

lecturer doubtless prided himself on a strict loyalty to the facts; he claimed to be dealing with the reality of the case. But he was in truth most disloyal to the facts; he was in truth utterly oblivious of the great reality. Such an experiment as this is for every man of common sense an instant and absolute refutation of materialism. For where, amid this mass of separated solids and this cloud of volatile gases, shall you find the distinctive qualities of human nature? Is carbon conscious? Can lime suffer? Can phosphorus think? You may combine them as you will; you may arrange and organize them; you may permeate them with heat and thrill them with electricity; but you can never recall the man who once lived and thought, suffered and loved, felt and willed within them. He was in the body, but he was not of it. When the body died, he escaped. The retort could not contain him, the fire could not burn him. Somewhere beyond the reach of hands and eyes, somewhere in this universe in which nothing can ever possibly be lost,

somewhere above the realm of physical science, the man exists. The chemical analysis has shown us what he is not, but it has not even touched the question of what he is.

We must turn then to a better source of information. We must interrogate a living man. We must ask one who is still within reach of our questioning, and whose knowledge of himself can still be communicated to us, "What are you?"

1. You are a conscious being. You perceive, you feel, you know. And here, in this fact, there is a great gulf fixed between you and the material world, a gulf which the greatest men of science say is impassable. No vibrations of the gray substance in the brain, no theory of the refinement of matter and the reflex action of nerve-cells, will explain the difference or bridge the chasm between an unconscious stone and a conscious man. The sensitive plate in the camera is touched and changed by the rays of light, and a picture of things remains upon it. But it does not *see* the visions which fill

you with gladness. The grains of sand scattered on a plate of steel are moved hither and thither, and arranged in beautiful curves and figures, by the waves of sound. But they do not *hear* the immortal music which thrills your soul with vague delight. They do not and they cannot. For though they are sensitive to the forces which surround them, they are not conscious, they have no perception and no emotion. That is to say, they are a portion of the material universe. But you are not. And your consciousness is just the sense of the chasm which divides *you* from all things created.

You sit apart as a spectator, a judge, a lord. Within the universe which encircles you, within the house which shelters you, within the body which contains you, your soul, your self, abides in the royal consciousness of personal identity. The spectacle of the world passes before you; you behold, you judge, you feel, you reason, you act. It is not the eye which perceives: it is *you* looking through it. It is not the ear which hears: it is *you*, sitting behind it. It is not

the hand which moves : it is *you* who stretch it forth. Never for an instant, never by any sophistry of reason, or trick of logic, can you lose your personal identity, or confuse yourself with the world in which you live. From the first moment of intelligence, you are separated from all things tangible and visible. You are yourself a reality, for you are conscious of it.

2. You are a free being. You are not subject to the laws which bind and control the material universe. Your body indeed is within the sphere of their dominion. If you reduce its temperature, it is frozen. If you overheat it, it is burned. But *you* can neither be burned nor frozen. The chains of gravitation which bind your feet to the dull earth cannot withhold your spirit from the stars. Borne on the swift wings of imagination, you sweep hither and thither at your will. The sunset gates open before you. The translucent depths of ocean cannot exclude your thought. You command your body, and it bears you whither you desire to go. And when its steps are hindered

and its progress barred by some great obstacle, your soul goes marching on, traveling in the greatness of its strength. You may be shut up in the darkness of a loathsome dungeon, but you cry, —

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

You are still free; for there is in you a power of will which no mortal force can shake or compel. The lightning may flash above you, the earthquake roll beneath you, the terrors of natural convulsions and the threatenings of human wrath may surround you. Men may torture you and give your body to be burned. But your will is untouched. You may choose, and none can change you. Ay! when the slightest and feeblest child of man has said, “*I will not,*” he has asserted a power which the weight of the whole world can never break.

Whence does this power come? Can it be the product of carbon and phosphorus, oxygen and hydrogen? Incredible! It is the direct evidence that you belong to a

higher order than the world which you can thus defy and conquer. It is the manifest strength of your living soul.

3. You are a moral being. Emancipated from the laws of matter and force, you are subject to the laws of spirit. Your inward life, your happiness, your welfare, depend upon your moral actions and relations.

I do not mean by this, merely that a man ought to have regard to the laws of right and wrong, and that if he despises and transgresses them he will inevitably be punished; although this is certainly true: but I mean to say now, that the real life of every man lies not in the realm of the visible, but in the realm of the invisible. Here are the wants which govern him, the ties which bind him, the laws which he may defy, but which he can never shake off. Here is the true sphere of his activity, — in knowledge, and love, and hope, and righteousness, — and here alone he can find success and satisfaction.

Do you need the proof of this? Do you need the evidence that man belongs to a

different order of beings from stones and trees and dumb animals? Look into your own heart and find it. You are conscious of higher thoughts and feelings, ranging infinitely above these things which perish in the using. You are filled with desires and longings which can never be satisfied with the food of the senses. You are bound by moral relations and responsibilities which can never be reduced to terms of chemistry or physics.

I have seen a man whose bodily wants were completely gratified, well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, —

“ In glowing health, with boundless wealth,
Yet sickening of a vague disease,” —

restless, feverish, discontented, unhappy. Why was he not at peace? Because he had a conscience which was tormented with remorse, because he had a heart which was empty of love, because he had a living soul which was starving to death.

I have seen a poor child lying on a bed of pain and sickness, pining away her life

within the narrow walls of a comfortless room, in want and weakness and distress, and yet her days were filled with quiet happiness, and the light of a great gladness rested tenderly upon her wasted face. What was the secret of her joyful contentment? She had a conscience which was at peace with God, she had a heart full of love, she had a living soul which was satisfied and overflowing with the Divine Grace.

Tell me not that this life of ours is a mere play of electric forces within a perishable form of earth. Tell me not that eating and drinking and sleeping are the realities of our existence, and all else is but dream and delusion.

“ I know we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries: not in vain
Like Paul, with beasts, I’ve fought with Death;

“ Not only cunning casts in clay;
Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men,
At least to me? I would not stay.

“ Let him the wiser man who springs
Hereafter, up from childhood shape
His action like the greater ape,
But I was born to other things.”

Yes, by the powers that rise within me and spread their spiritual wings for flight beyond the bounds of sense, and by the yearnings which meat and drink can never still, the outreachings of the heart for truth and love, —

“the obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings,
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our guilty nature
Doth tremble like a thing surprised,”—

by the awful sense of right and wrong, by the joy of goodness, by the pain of sin, by the longing for God, I know that I am a living soul.

II. But for how long? That is the question. This living soul is indubitably bound to a material body. With the body it grows and acts and enjoys and suffers. Does it also decay and perish with the body? As the muscles relax, and the limbs grow feeble, and the senses are dulled, — as the breath falters and fails, as the eyes close, as the heart trembles and stands

still, — does the living spirit cease to be? Does the light of the soul go out in utter darkness? Not so! It has within itself the promise and the power of an endless life. It is made not for time, but for eternity. And even while it dwells within the frail and feeble tenement of the body, the soul is conscious of its immortal destiny.

1. This is the universal testimony of the human race. Mankind will not believe that death ends all. In every religion there is a doctrine of a future life. The tombs and temples of the world, the massive pyramids of Egypt, the glittering shrines of the East, the stately edifices of Greece and Rome, the vast circles of gray stones which bear their mysterious witness to the forgotten faith of ancient Britain, the gigantic altars hidden in the forests of South America, — all these are monuments, not so much of the Past, as of the Future. They are silent witnesses to the faith of humanity in another world.

And is it not a wonderful thing that such a faith should everywhere exist? Is it not

a wonderful thing that man beholding death on every side, living in a world where all things are subject to decay, seeing hundreds of his fellow-beings perish about him day by day, feeling in his own body the power of disease and dissolution, should ever have dared to begin, should still dare to continue, to believe that he would not die? Whence came this faith? Surely not from a mortal source. Surely a power divine has written on the soul that inscription which sin cannot bury and doubt cannot efface, *Thou art immortal.*

2. I think every one of us has read this inscription on his own soul. Every one of us has a deep personal conviction of immortality. We may not be able to explain it; we may not be able to argue it out. But we feel that we shall live forever. The sense of personal identity, the absolute unity of our being, makes it inconceivable that we should perish. For destruction means dissolution. And that which has no parts, that which is a unit, cannot be dissolved. The soul, that which feels and

thinks and wills, your self, is individual, and therefore indissoluble. You can imagine your body as crumbling away, decaying, scattering, vanishing. But you cannot think yourself non-existent.

3. Moreover, the very powers of man's spiritual life demand a wider field and an unlimited duration for their exercise and completion. There is something prophetic in thought and in emotion. In the heart of our imperfect knowledge there is lodged the hope of a perfect wisdom. At the end of our broken reasonings there shines the light of a higher truth. All our conclusions, all our theories, all our aspirations, point forward. Our very defects are intimations of a future development, and our limitations are but barriers which we are gaining strength to overleap.

What is it all worth unless there be a beyond? What are the attainments and acquisitions of our three-score and ten years, unless they are to be completed and perfected and applied in a hereafter? Why struggle and toil to gather a little knowl-

edge that will be buried in all its weakness and incompleteness in the grave? But Reason herself breaks the chains of such a despairing doctrine. She shapes her wings to fly. She looks onward and upward. An endless vista opens before her. She anticipates immortality.

And how much more prophetic is love! Those strong affections which bind heart to heart and life to life in the most precious and beautiful of human relationships, that intense devotion which almost seems to conquer personality and make of two souls one, those tender and sensitive emotions which seem so frail and unsubstantial, but have the power to master every faculty and sway the spirit at their will, — when do they find their earthly close and completion? What do they know of dissolution? They will not hear of death. They reach out into the gloom. They demand and they promise a future satisfaction, — an endless reunion. “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 forever 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 we love ?” No, a thousand times no ! If this world were all, the life of man would be a mockery and a curse, infinitely more wretched and pitiable than that of the brutes, who perish without love or thought. These pure desires, these ardent longings, these close and tender affections, — kindled and fostered in our hearts for a few brief years and then shattered forever ? Nay, they live forever. They do not acknowledge the dominion of the grave. They belong to a higher world.

“ Love is indestructible.

Its holy flame forever burneth ;
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth.
It soweth here with toil and care,
But the harvest time of love is there.”

4. Once more, the relations of the human soul to God demand a future and endless life. We know Him, but our knowledge is partial, broken, and imperfect. Glimpses of His face we catch through the rolling clouds that encircle Him, and these glimpses contain the promise of a clearer vision, a closer knowledge. We worship and love Him, but this adoration and this love are feeble and incomplete. Drawings and upliftings of the heart towards Him we feel, and these emotions are the pledge of a more perfect love, of a more living fellowship. We acknowledge Him as our Lord and Ruler, we know that we stand before Him to be judged. And this sense of awful responsibility is the prophecy that we shall appear before His face to answer for our lives. It is incredible that we should ever have known Him, incredible that He should ever have brought us into such relations with Himself, if we were but transient and perishable forms of clay. By the reality of God we know that we are living souls, and that our souls shall live forever.

Here, then, is the truth which you feel in every fibre of your being, which is confirmed by all the experience of thought and feeling and will, which is echoed by the strong clear voice of humanity, and attested by the word of God. Not that you *have* a soul as well as a body. But that you are a soul, living, spiritual, immortal, and that your destiny stretches on before you into eternity.

Since this is so, how will you answer the question of Christ, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Surely he must be of all men the most miserable.

What can be compared for a moment with the needs and destinies of the soul? Even here, upon this bank and shoal of time, they are supreme above all other interests. There is a hunger which cannot be stayed with bread. There is a thirst which cannot be quenched with water. There is a nakedness which cannot be covered with purple and fine linen. Vainly shall you strive to satisfy these wants with things which perish in the using. You are spend-

ing your strength for naught, and your labor for that which satisfieth not. You are wasting your life, if you are neglecting your soul. Deeply, unutterably wretched must you be if you do not provide for your highest needs and care for your noblest interests. The heavenly bread of truth, the living water of faith, the white robe of holiness, — seek and find these things, and your soul shall be satisfied and at peace even here on earth.

And beyond, — in that mysterious life which stretches away through endless ages, — how great, how infinite are the interests of your soul! When this body in which you live has fallen in decrepitude and mingled with the graveyard mould, when these walls have crumbled and this roof has sunken in decay, when this great and proud city has become a ruin, and the world itself has perished, — when a million years have passed away, your soul will still be living in wretchedness or in bliss. What then will you think of the objects which you now pursue so eagerly, — the fame, the wealth,

the pleasure of this world? They will seem to you as nothing, and less than nothing. A moment of time in the balance against eternity; a single drop of pleasure against an ocean of happiness; a single pang of sacrifice against an endless woe; a span of life with man against an everlasting fellowship with God,—when you have weighed these things through the unceasing ages, you will understand that the one question in the world which has reality, beside which all others vanish like dreams, is this: How shall you save your immortal soul?

IV.

THE LIVING WORD.

IV.

HEB. iv. 12. *The word of God is quick and powerful.*

THIS sermon revolves about a book. A book which has been accepted, for a score of centuries, as divine; a book which has exercised a wider and deeper influence upon human thought and life than all other volumes in the world, — such a book as this is certainly no dream, but a reality, and one well worthy of our attention.

But I do not propose to consider the Bible merely as a book. For the one thing that is peculiar about it, is that it claims to be something more than a mere literary production. In whatever form it comes to us, — written on rolls of ancient and discolored parchment, repeated by living lips of men who have learned it by heart, printed on coarsest paper or on costliest sheets of vel-

lum, in Hebrew or in Greek, in English or in Chinese, bound in the fragrant leather of Russia or scattered abroad in fragments on loose and flying leaves, — in whatever shape the Bible comes to men, it claims to be something better than a book. It presents itself as a living word, — the word of the Almighty God revealing Himself to His creatures.

The question is whether this claim is true. Not, can we justify it, — but does it justify itself? Not, can we explain and analyze and defend it, — but do we feel it as a reality? For after all the Bible must be its own argument and defense. The power of it can never be proved unless it is felt. The authority of it can never be supported unless it is manifest. The light of it can never be demonstrated unless it shines. If it comes to us with a quickening and illuminating might; if it is warm and throbbing with a secret life; if, as Coleridge said, *it finds us*, and touches us, and makes our souls alive, then we know that it is divine.

For this is the difference between a word

and a book. The one is mechanical, the other is vital. The one is printed and bound and read, the other breathes and moves and works. The one is a material product, the other is a spiritual power. And the point of supreme importance in all the present controversies about the Bible is just this: Does it truly manifest a superhuman spiritual life and power; does it convey to us the mind and heart and will of our Heavenly Father? For if it does, this dead book contains the living word of the living God spoken eternally to the living soul.

You see at once this carries us far beyond the sphere of literary and critical investigation. Theories of inspiration, verbal, literal, plenary, partial; arguments concerning authorship and authority; higher criticism and lower criticism; disputes about names and numbers, — all these we shall leave far behind us. We do not say that they are trivial, but we do say that they are secondary. We do say that men are dwelling upon them with undue emphasis, and reducing the Bible to the level of mere literature. We

do say that the study of the Scriptures in the spirit of cold historical research or supercilious fault-finding, the picking over of its facts and narratives with the sole purpose of exhibiting either their inconsistency or their agreement, is not a religious work in the highest sense of the word, and ought never to be made the prominent theme of public preaching or of private meditation.

It is as if God should send an angel to tell us of Himself; and our first effort should be to catch the shining messenger, lay him on the dissecting-table, and cut him in pieces, to find out how he was made.

Bind not, slay not, the word of God. For if it is to save us it must come to us alive, and speak with a living voice to our deepest hearts.

This is what we want. This is what our spirits long and yearn and cry to receive;— a real communication from that great and awful Being in whose image we are made and in whose communion alone we can find rest; an utterance from that Father whose face we have not seen, but for whose love

our hearts are hungry; a word of God, which shall be quick and powerful to our souls, and kindle them to a higher, a holier, a happier life. If we can find this it will be more precious than rubies; we will cherish it more than all earthly treasures; it will be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, a consolation and a joy forever.

We have a right, then, and not only a right, but, in the highest sense, a duty, to apply to the Bible the simple and searching test which is suggested by the text. It is true that these words were not written, in their original connection, of the entire Scriptures as we now possess them. They refer strictly to a specific utterance of Jehovah, the word of warning and judgment which was spoken to His ancient people. But, at the same time, they are a true description of every divine word. Every utterance of God must have and manifest these two qualities, and their presence or absence is a sufficient test of the reality of a revelation.

It must be *quick and powerful*: not merely agile and strong: the original meaning of

the words goes far deeper, ζῶν καὶ ἐνεργής, — living and operative, inworking, power-producing. We have here the two ideas of vitality and activity, a life manifested in energy, a spiritual existence and a spiritual potency. We may, therefore, consider the word of God in the Bible, first, as living; second, as life-producing.

I. The marks of life are three: unity, continuity, adaptability.

1. Every living thing is a unit. It has a centre, a single and individual principle of being. The most famous attempt of modern science to define life is based upon this fact. That which is alive must be homogeneous. And this is the great difference between a living creature and a manufactured article. The manufactured article has parts. The living creature has no parts, but limbs and organs which are made one by the spirit of life.

In a spiritual sense this is evidently true of the Bible. There is a manifest unity in it. It is not a composition of disordered and discordant fragments. It is one Word.

A single life animates it and breathes from every page. And this appears the more wonderful when we reflect that in its outward form it is the work of men separated one from another by the widest differences of age, of character, of training, and of environment. More than a thousand years were occupied in the writing of it. Legislators, shepherds, poets, warriors, kings, a tent-maker, a physician, a fisherman; men of action and men of reflection, men of no education and men of the highest learning, men of fiery temper and men of gentle spirit, — more than forty hands were employed upon this work. And yet it is one throughout, woven without seam from top to bottom. The same view of God, deepening and unfolding; the same view of man, piercing farther and farther into the secrets of the soul; the same view of life, lifting ever higher and higher the standard of holiness and love. Under many different forms and manners of speech it is always the same mighty voice declaring to us the same living truth.

You cannot cut up the Word of God, and you cannot piece it out. Try it. Take a fragment from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, and insert it into the books of Moses : or take the apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus, and thrust it into the opening chapters of St. Luke's Gospel. Instantly you will perceive that you have added a piece of old cloth to a new garment. You have spoiled the book. You have made a rent, not an addition. The spiritual unity of the Word is violated. It will not suffer the mingling of any human substance with it.

Now whence comes this marvelous inward unity? Not from external causes. Not from a preconcerted agreement of the writers, for men who lived a thousand years apart could not have consulted together as to what they should write. Not from a similarity of circumstances, for nothing could be more different than the surroundings of Moses and Solomon from those of Paul and John. Not from a conscious imitation, for then the writers would have been more careful to produce an outward resemblance and less

successful in accomplishing an inward unity. It can come only from the one Spirit who breathes and speaks alike through all these different instruments, and uses the histories and prophecies and psalms of the Old Testament, the narratives and epistles of the New Testament, to convey the Word of God to men.

We feel this by a sort of instinct. We recognize the same spiritual tone and accent in every portion of the Word. We feel that it must be received altogether or not at all; for it is one, bound together in a truly vital unity.

2. And this unity is continuous. This also is a mark of every living creature. It is not momentary and transient. It has a principle of life, a purpose, a tendency; and its life-history, be it long or short, is the continuous and consistent unfolding of this principle. The living creature is not a plant to-day and a bird to-morrow. From the first moment of its existence to the last, it follows a straight line. It develops and acts with continuity.

This is characteristic of the Word of God as it is contained in the Bible. It has always manifested its life in the same line, with powers and qualities which grow, but do not change. From the very first it has entered into the spiritual history of the race with a unique character which it has preserved to the present day. The Jews accepted it, in its first imperfect form, as the utterance of God, and it was to them the source and fountain of religious life. Jesus Christ recognized and used it in the same spirit. His disciples were guided and controlled by it in the same way. From age to age it grew; book after book was added to the canon of Scripture, until at last it was complete; but the life and history of the Word have been unbroken and continuous. It has not been one thing to one century, and another to the next. Always and everywhere, it has been the revelation of the Divine to the human. And now, after so many centuries have passed away, it is still manifesting the same life, still doing the same work in the world.

Where shall you find another book which has had such a history? "The little ark of Jewish literature," containing the living treasure of God's word, "still floats above the surges of time, while mere fragments of the wrecked archives of the huge oriental empires, as well as of the lesser kingdoms that surrounded Judea, are now and then cast upon our distant shores."

3. Another mark of life is adaptability. By this I mean the power of the living creature to fit itself to its surroundings, to adjust its operations to a varied and changing environment. And this belongs in an eminent degree to the Word of God.

Consider how different are the races to which it has come; how widely separated in disposition and employment are the individuals in whose hands it has been placed. And yet to all tribes, and to all men, it has adapted itself with vital power. The Hebrews found that it was a sure and sufficient guide for them, alike in their desert-wanderings and in their established kingdom under the house of David. The nations of Chris-

tian Europe have made it the basis of all their forms of government. It is woven into the established law of every civilized people. The fathers of our own Republic, coming to set up their new nation upon the barren shores of this wild continent, could find no better guide than this same word of God. Into every country it has come; into every language it has been translated. I have seen a volume called "The Bible of every Land," in which there are portions of this book as it has been rendered in more than two hundred and fifty different tongues.

It is the Word of the world. It does not belong to any race, nor to any class. It belongs to all men. "It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholar, and colors the talk of the streets. It enters men's closets, mingles in all the grief and cheerfulness of life. The Bible attends men in sickness, when the fever of the world is upon them. . . . It is the better part of our sermons, it lifts man

above himself. Our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech wherewith our fathers and the patriarchs prayed. The timid man, about to wake from his dream of life, looks through the glass of Scripture, and his eye grows bright; he does not fear to stand alone, to tread the way unknown and distant, to take the death-angel by the hand, and bid farewell to wife and babes and home. . . . Some thousand famous writers come up in this century to be forgotten in the next; but the silver cord of the Bible is not loosed, nor its golden bowl broken, as Time chronicles his tens of centuries passed by."

And can not we also bear witness to this marvelous and living adaptability of this Word of God to every mood and phase of our own experience? There are some of us, I know, who have stood, like Ruskin, in childhood beside our mother's knee, and heard, with a pleasure which is now hallowed in our memory, that dear voice reading the wise counsels and wondrous histories of the Bible. There are some of

us who have turned, in the hour of great perplexity and temptation of the evil one, to these sacred pages, and found the saving, enlightening word which alone could show us the true way and strengthen us to follow it. There are some of us who have received from this precious book the consolation without which we never could have borne the sorrows and bereavements of our life. Yes, and there are some of us who have sat in the darkened room, beside the bed of death, and read the blessed words which seemed to fill the place of gloom and anguish with the very light and peace of heaven. "Read to me," said Sir Walter Scott, when he lay a-dying, to his son-in-law, Lockhart. "What book shall I read?" asked Lockhart. "Can you ask?" was the reply, "there is but one;" and he begged him to read a chapter from St. John's Gospel. Ah! those well-worn pages, blotted perhaps in your Bible with the mark of tears, stained with the little flower that you have pressed between them, — can their comfort ever die, can their life ever cease?

Nay, for they bring to us the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

II. But now turn for a moment to consider the life-producing power of the Word as it is contained in the Scriptures. The spiritual efficiency of the Bible in the world is manifest in facts which cannot be questioned, and is of such a nature as to prove that it cannot be a mere book, but must be a living word. Wherever it comes and is received it brings forth fruit. It enlightens, purifies, uplifts. It really brings God nearer to men, and men nearer to God. It creates a real and living bond, and establishes an intimate communion between the divine and the human.

This power is not confined to any one portion of the Word, but belongs to it all. From the histories of the Old Testament as well as from those of the New, from the precepts of the law as well as from the poetry of the Psalms, from the discourses of the prophets as well as from the doctrines of the apostles, the same vital influence and energy flow to the soul.

The life which the Bible produces is three-fold, — intellectual, moral, and spiritual. It gives men wider and clearer conceptions of truth, deeper and stronger convictions of duty, closer and purer relations to God; and in doing this it manifests an energy which can only come from His living Word.

1. I do not think we fully understand how much of the intelligence of humanity in the higher spheres of knowledge and thought is directly due to the Bible. The revelations which it brings have filtered through a thousand secret channels into the remotest corners of the world, and return to us without acknowledging the source from which they sprung. Many of the noblest utterances of philosophy and the grandest theories of science are but the unfolding of seeds which have fallen from the fullness of Scripture into the hidden places of the human mind. All that is best and loftiest in our modern thought — its high regard for humanity, its spiritual conception of Deity, the breadth of its charity, and the firmness with which it lays hold on the hopes of a better

future for the race — may be traced directly to the Bible. The very men who rail at it and affect to despise it owe their best ideas to its influence. The reason why an enlightened American has a nobler and a truer view of the world and life than an African savage, is chiefly because he has the Word of God. Blot out that which has come from the Bible, and you will destroy the best part of the intellectual life of the race.

2. But wider still, and more glorious, has been the influence of this Word upon man's moral life. Wherever it has come it has elevated and purified humanity. Righteousness and peace flourish under its shadow. It is the bulwark of civil and religious liberty; the corner-stone of the hospital and the asylum; the shelter and safeguard of the happy home. On its sure foundation governments are established, and by its holy sanction laws are made sacred. It is the fountain of public equity and private virtue; it makes men just and loyal and obedient; binds them to serve their country and their

kind; summons them to defend the oppressed and resist tyranny; inspires them to deeds of chivalry and daring. It stretches a protecting arm about the poor and suffering, and opens the sweet springs of charity and mercy in the human heart. Women are purer and sweeter, men are braver and better, where the Word of God has come. "Wherever it is duly obeyed, it makes the desert of the world to bud and blossom as the rose."

Well has this been illustrated by the words of one of the Bishops of the English Church:—

"I invite any honest-minded man to look at a map of the world and see what a story that map tells. Which are the countries on the face of the globe at this moment where there is the greatest amount of idolatry, or cruelty, or impurity, or misgovernment, or disregard of life, liberty, and truth? Precisely those countries where the Bible is not known. Which are the Christian countries, so-called, where the greatest quantity of ignorance, superstition, and corruption is to

be found at the moment? The countries in which the Bible is a forbidden or neglected book, — such countries as Spain and the South American States. Which are the countries where liberty and public and private morality have attained the highest pitch? The countries where the Bible is free to all, like England, Scotland, Germany, and the United States. Yes! when you know how a nation deals with the Bible you may know what that nation is.”

Now what is the secret of this? Surely this is a result too large to come from any mere book. This is the moral power of a living word, and a word which is backed by the authority of God Himself. Here is the vast and vital difference between the Bible and all systems of human morality. They tell us to do thus and so because it is useful or because it is right. But the Word tells us to do thus and so because God wills it. He who is above all things in power and glory, He who has made us for His service and can reward us with everlasting blessedness, *He* speaks to us, saying, “This do and

thou shalt live." Thus our virtue is lifted above the sphere of mere utility or expediency, and our duty becomes a golden chain to bind us to the ever-living and ever-blessed God.

3. And here, you see, the moral life produced by the Bible runs into the spiritual. All wisdom and all goodness are embraced in the right relation of the human soul to God. This is life, present and eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. And this the Divine Word gives to us. It really brings us into contact with God.

Where else shall we find this knowledge? Destroy, for a moment, all that is contained in the Bible about God, and what will you have left? What will you know of His goodness, His mercy, His truth? What assurance will you have of your relation to Him, your power to obtain His grace and favor? What will remain of your conception of His fatherhood, your trust in His providence, your reliance on His everlasting love? Oh, how vague and feeble, how cold

and distant, how glimmering and uncertain, are all the lights of nature and philosophy compared with the light of the Word!

“Stars are poor books and oftentimes do miss ;
This book of stars lights to eternal bliss.”

The heavens declare the glory of God ; but the Word shows us His forgiving mercy and His tender compassion. Every creature that He has made bears witness to His wisdom and power ; but the Word comes to us warm and living from a Father's heart, and draws us to Him in penitence and faith. Here we learn of that purpose of redemption which was hidden from all eternity in the bosom of God. Here we see Him dealing in righteousness and mercy with His guilty and erring children, binding them to Himself in covenants of everlasting love, leading them wisely and kindly in the way of life, chastening their faults, forgiving their sins, binding up their wounds, healing their diseases, restoring their souls, and lighting up all the darkness of their mortal pathway with the glow of His heavenly promises.

Here we see Jesus Christ moving graciously and tenderly through a world of sin and sorrow, and hear from His lips the precious words of grace and truth. Here we behold, as through an open portal, the mysteries of the world to come, and catch the sweet echoes of the immortal songs of Paradise. All our light upon the past, all our comfort in the present, all our sweet and priceless hopes for the future, come from this Word.

And by its power our souls do live. Not by bread alone, but by the whisperings of our Father's voice, the warnings of His wrath, the pleadings of His mercy, the promises of His love, our spirits are quickened and made alive. How often has the Word pierced our consciences with the arrow of conviction for sin, and brought us trembling and repenting to the feet of God! How often has it revealed, amid the darkness of our guilt, the forgiving face of the Saviour shining with unspeakable compassion, and calmed our troubled and despairing spirits with the words of pardon! How often has it lifted us above the storms and

pains and sorrows of this mortal life, into the blessed peace of that upper world where God dwells, and comforted us with a great quietness, as one who hears his Father's voice!

Ah, my friends, we do not need a long historical argument, an array of documents and proofs, a profound and exact theory of inspiration. We do not care to wrangle and dispute about the letter, for we have felt the power of the spirit. We know that this is the Word of God because it speaks to our hearts.

V.

THE LIVING SACRIFICE.

V.

ST. JOHN i. 29. *Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.*

THIS text is like a living hand pointing forever to the Cross of Christ. It does not propound a doctrine; it declares a fact. It does not move in the world of dreams and abstractions, but in the world of reality. It calls us not to suppose or imagine, but to *behold*; to open our eyes and see the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world.

Is this true? As we follow the guidance of this pointing hand can we indeed discern something real and substantial? Can we see the burden lifted from the heart of man and laid upon the Saviour? Can we see the stains of evil washed away from the soul by the flowing of His blood? Can we see the race restored to harmony and peace with

God by the atoning power of the offering of Jesus?

This is the question of supreme importance. For upon the answer to this depends the reality of our religion. If this be not true, then are we without hope in the world. We have a God, existing from all eternity, perfect, serene, immutable. We have a soul, made in His image, and destined to an everlasting existence. But we have no bond between us and Him, no promise of His mercy, no assurance of His love. And even His living Word, the revelation of His character and will, becomes vain and worthless, loses the very heart of its life, the very spring of its power, unless we can discover the reality of the Atonement.

I ask you then to look this question in the face. Rest not in any theory. Build not on any doctrine. Lay hold upon the facts. Question the world and see if it has sinned. Question the Christ and see if He be the Lamb of God. Question the Cross and see if it has saved men from guilt and death.

I. Behold the sin of the world. Is it a reality or is it a fiction?

Look out upon the varied scene of human life and tell me truthfully what you see there. You behold man dwelling in a fair, well-ordered universe, the manifest creation of a beneficent God. You behold him surrounded with all things which are needful for his happiness, and incited by every motive to a life of peace and holiness. But you behold instantly that he is neither peaceful nor holy, and therefore that he is not truly happy. How dark and terrible, amidst the innocence and joy of nature, are the evidences of human guilt and misery! The green and tender sward beside the gate of Paradise is stained with the blood of a brother slain by a brother's hand. The solemn forests are filled with cruel and degraded savages. The pure-eyed stars look down on scenes of violence and lust. The golden fields of grain are trampled and destroyed by warring armies locked in the fury of the death-struggle, and the clear streams are defiled with carnage. Avarice and envy, guile and oppression, wrath and falsehood, perturb and

poison the springs of peace. From a thousand reeking cities goes up the pitiful cry of the children ; from every land the exhalations of human wickedness and woe rise like heavy smoke blackening against the blue of heaven.

And does not man himself feel this ? Does he not know that there is something wrong with him ? Is not the mark of shame written on his brow, and the sense of evil pressed upon his heart ?

He stands amid the majestic purity, the unconscious gladness of the world, like a creature under an unholy spell.

“ He crouches and blushes,
 Absconds and conceals ;
 He creepeth and peepeth,
 He paltereth and steals ;
 Infirm, melancholy,
 Jealous, glancing around,
 An oaf, an accomplice,
 He poisons the ground.”

What ails him, the Lord of all things, the flower of the universe ? Who has drugged his cup and mixed his bread with bitterness ? What fatal power has marred the

joy and beauty of his life? What mighty barrier has risen between his soul and God?

Sin; the choice of evil instead of good, the perversion of the desires, the slavery of the will, the darkening of the mind, the deadly sickness of the whole heart. This is the fountain of all trouble, the cause of all disorder and wretchedness. This is the wall which makes the world seem sometimes like a prison and sometimes like a madhouse. This is the curse which destroys life's harmony and beauty. This is the obstacle which separates the soul, in darkness and sorrow, from God. The forms of every religion, the voice of unceasing prayers, the smoke of endless burnt-offerings, the blood of bulls and goats, the oblations of all that is most precious, cruel altars drenched with human gore, and flames consuming the offspring of man's body, — gifts, propitiations, pleadings, sacrifices, without stint and without number, — bear witness to the deep and awful sense of sin which rests upon the heart of the world.

Look now into your own heart and tell me what you read there. Is it not the same inscription? Are you higher and holier than your race? Are you free from their burden and exempt from their blame?

You do not dare to claim it. You know that you are bound to this sinful, perverted, and unhappy humanity. The same passions which have wrought the discord and misery of the world are lurking in your own soul. You know that your heart has missed its true goal. You know that your feet have wandered from the right way. You know that your will has transgressed the law which ought to bind you. Dimly though you discern the true end of your being, you are conscious that you have not reached it. Faintly though you apprehend the glory of God, you feel that you have come far short of it. Judged by the standards and commandments of men, you may be just and free from blame. But you know that there is something higher than this. You know that these human laws and tests are imperfect and evil-tainted. You know that

there is a holiness which is supreme and perfect, a love which has no stain or shadow of self in it, a will which flows towards the right with an unswerving and ceaseless motion, — *and this is God*. When the vision of His perfection flashes upon you, when you know that you were made in His image, born to love Him and be like Him, then you are humbled in the darkness and the dust. You tremble and are ashamed before Him. You know that you have sunken infinitely below Him, you have forfeited His favor, you are an offense and loathing to His pure eyes.

It is a vain thing to attempt to resolve this sense of sin into a mere consciousness of weakness or defect. It is something far deeper and more painful than that. To be ignorant, and to err on account of that ignorance; to be feeble, and to fail on account of that feebleness, does not involve the deep and burning sense of *guilt*. The blind man is not tortured with remorse because he cannot see. The lame man's conscience does not reproach him because

he cannot run and leap. These are misfortunes beyond the power of man's will to prevent or remedy, and so far are they from increasing guilt and condemnation that we actually regard them as excuses and palliations. We do not blame the man whose eyes are darkened for walking over the precipice. We do not demand the same high virtue from the ignorant as from the wise. Weakness and imperfection call forth our pity, rather than our scorn. But with *sin* there is a world-wide difference. Here the conscience at once accuses and condemns. Here the sense of shame and guilt burns into the soul more deeply than any pain of outward consequences, or penalties of an offended law. A commandment broken, a treasure lost, a white robe stained and defiled, a flower of innocence trampled in the mire, a holy Judge offended, a loving Father wounded and thrust aside, a divine fellowship forfeited and destroyed, — these are the bitter things that mingle in the consciousness of sin.

And these are the things that divide

the soul from God. Who dares deny them or make light of them? When the day of judgment bursts in flaming splendor upon the world, and the living and the dead are gathered before the awful throne, who will dare to lift his eyes to God and say, "I am free and guiltless; I have broken no law in thought, or word, or deed; I meet and defy Thy justice"? Or now, at this very hour, while those unseen eyes are bent upon us, reading our hearts to their very depths, what one of us dare lift his hand to heaven and cry, "Behold me, for I am pure: let Thy light flash through my inmost soul; there is no stain or shadow there: I am perfect like Thee and fit for Thy companionship: sitting among the husks and feeding on them, I am worthy to be called Thy son"?

We can not; we dare not. It would be blasphemy. The heavens would almost open above us and send forth a flash of light to destroy us. Whatever men may think of us, whatever honor and praise may be ours in the world, in the presence of

the Holy One we put our hands on our mouths and hide our faces in the dust, crying, "Unclean, unclean, — God have mercy upon us!"

II. But now behold the one Being in the world who has never felt this defilement of sin, the one pure and perfect Lamb of God. He also is a reality; not a dream or an ideal, but a living, breathing man; born into the world in the likeness of our flesh; growing, thinking, feeling, laboring, enjoying, suffering, even as we do; tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin. This holy life of Christ is a fact, — solid, substantial, enduring. It stands like a rock amid the billows of time. All the assaults of skeptics and unbelievers, the open violence of avowed enemies and the secret treachery of hidden foes, have not availed to destroy or even to shake it. It abides. It towers high above the highest levels of humanity. It shines like a pillar of light. The eyes of all men turn to it with wonder and love.

I ask you to search the book of history

and tell me if you can find one character which is worthy to be compared for a moment with the character of Jesus of Nazareth. What company of honorable men would not be abashed and put to shame by His presence? What roll of lofty names is pure enough to claim an equal place with His name?

I ask you to search the record of His life, calmly, fairly, dispassionately, and tell me if there be any spot or blemish in it. His enemies watched him like hawks, but they never found the slightest trace of sin. Judas would have given the world to discover the faintest suspicion of evil in Him whom he had so basely sold to death, but he could not, and he cursed himself in the despair of hell because he had betrayed the innocent blood. Pilate, the cold and haughty Roman, could find no fault in Him, and washed his hands in water lest the blood of that Just One should cling to them. The friends and relatives who lived with Him in the familiar intercourse of daily life saw no defect or flaw in Him. He was

not holy on the outside only. He was altogether pure. The sun might have shone through Him without disclosing a spot. Aye, the sun did shine through Him, for He stood up before God and men to declare His innocence. He cried to His enemies, "Who among you convinceth me of sin?" He said to God, "I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do." He looked up to heaven without shame and without repentance. And no fiery shaft leaped forth to blast Him for presumption, but instead the soft sweet radiance of divine approval fell upon Him, and there came a voice from the most excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Did ever flower so fair blossom before or since upon this blood-stained earth? Did ever star so clear shine out in the darkness of the night of sin? Nay, there is something here that transcends the powers of our fallen and defiled race, something more pure and holy than the best that man can do. Here is a manifestation of Divine virtue

and heavenly beauty ; here is an unfolding of the perfect and eternal Holiness ; here indeed is the Lamb of God in whom is no sin.

But how comes He, then, into a sinful world ? How has His life been bound to that of corrupt and guilty man ? Why does He suffer the pains and sorrows which are the punishment of sin, and finally die the death of a transgressor ?

There is but one answer which can explain this mystery. There is but one answer which can justify a just God in permitting the death of the only pure and innocent Being who ever lived on earth. *He comes voluntarily into the world to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the world's sin. He comes to take away the curse by bearing it in His own body. He comes to present to God that holy and spotless oblation which the lost race could never find.* Myriads of bulls and goats had been offered in vain ; thousands of altars had been drenched with blood and blackened with smoke of fruitless sacrifice ; then said He, "Lo, I

come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." To do all that the law demands and to suffer all that sin has deserved, to drink to the dregs the bitter cup of anguish, to endure the sharpness of death, to pour out the last drop of the willing heart upon the world's high altar, and thus to reconcile the world to God.

This was the purpose of Christ's life, which lay upon Him from the beginning, and without which we cannot understand His words or His actions. This is why the disciples did not comprehend Him, because they saw not the awful Cross towards which He was steadily moving. Judged by their standards, His life was strange and foolish and unsuccessful. He cast away His best opportunities of winning the people. He chose the path which led Him away from favor and power. As a teacher, as a leader, as a ruler of Israel, He failed. But as a sacrifice for sin,— ah! *there* He is crowned with victory and glory.

From the first moment of His ministry He

took this burden upon Him, — the burden of the world's sin, — and He bore it to the end.

Why was His head bowed with grief, and His countenance marred above the sons of men? *Because the load of the sins of mankind was pressing upon His heart.* Why did His tears fall like rain, as He looked down from the hillside on the city that He longed to save? *Because the sorrow of sin — sin which rejected and despised Him, sin which cast away the proffered pardon and scorned the mercy of God — was piercing His soul.* Why did He lie upon the ground, in the darkness of Gethsemane, and sweat great drops of blood in the agony of His spirit? *Because the awful weight of a world's sin was crushing Him in heaviness even unto death.*

Ah! not half so heavy was the ponderous cross beneath which He toiled to Calvary, as the burden of sin which He took upon His shoulders. Not half so sharp were the nails which pierced His hands and feet, as the sorrow for sin which entered into His

soul. Not half so bitter was the desertion of His disciples or the loneliness of the cross, as the dreadful gloom of that inward desolation in which His Father's face was lost, and He cried out of the depths, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Why, indeed, even though but for an instant? Why, indeed, even though the desertion was not real, but only the hiding of the Father's face by the black cloud of anguish? Why did God even *seem* to forsake Him? *Because He was bearing the guilt of a world's sin; because He was tasting death for every man; because it was only through the horrible darkness of that passage that He could enter into the light and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom.*

And has He truly entered into it? Has the sacrifice availed to remove the curse and destroy the enmity? Has the blood of Christ made peace between man and God?

III. I answer in the words of the text, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." When John

said this it was a dark saying, hard to be understood, shining only with the dim radiance of hope. But to-day it is a light saying, clear, glorious, resplendent. For the Son of Man has been lifted up, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and those who have believed on Him have been saved.

The saving power of the Cross of Christ is no theory ; it is a fact. The sign of shame and guilt has become the sign of faith and hope. The instrument of torture and death, defiled and loathed and hated, has been lifted out of the gloom and horror of sin, transfigured, crowned with honor and victory, and planted forever on the hill of salvation. The eyes of the world turn to the Cross of Christ. Fainting, despairing, dying, bound in the prison-houses of crime, languishing in the lazarets of sin, crushed under the load of transgressions, parched and burning with the fever of life, from every place of sorrow and suffering and darkness, the lost children of man are looking to the Cross with speechless longing,

and feeling its blessed power with unutterable joy.

When we see the Son of God crucified for us we are delivered and healed and made alive. The burden is lifted from us, and the fetters broken by His pierced hand. The precious blood falls upon our hearts, and we are made clean and pure. The light of love shining from that Divine face flows into our souls, and we see God reconciling the world to Himself in Jesus Christ.

Here at last, on the Cross, is the sacrifice which I have been seeking, but could never find; the pure and perfect offering which God cannot refuse. All my works are sinful and all my offerings tainted with evil. Never can I atone for my own sins, or make a propitiation which shall take away their guilt. But this is the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, dying for me. This is my sacrifice. I lay hold of the cross. I touch these wounded feet and plead with God by the merits of that priceless blood to forgive my sins. Thou canst not refuse me, for my heart embraces the perfect sacrifice,

and His offering thou wilt not despise. Yes, I know that my sins were all laid upon His head ; I know that He bore the curse for me ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

Here too, on the Cross, I see the pattern and example of that perfect obedience that I fain would render to my God. Gladly would I live the life of filial surrender and self-sacrifice ; gladly would I give myself wholly and perfectly to God, and lose myself entirely in His will. But my heart is weak and wayward. I cannot do the things that I would. I am filled with shame and reproach. I need a stronger, holier motive. I lay hold of the Cross. I look up to Him who suffers there, and pray, "Blessed Master, make me more like Thyself ; teach me the sanctifying power of Thy sacrificial love." Oh, how strong and sweet are the influences which flow to us from the Cross, lifting us up, purifying us, making us willing to endure and suffer and give ourselves more utterly for others ! As we see the blessed Saviour bleeding and dying so pa-

tiently for us, what will we not gladly do for Him? Can we still love the sins which slew Him? Can we still withhold the hearts for which He asks us? "*For Christ's sake.*" "*Remember Calvary.*" These words have power beyond all others to deliver us from the bondage of evil, and bind us to the life of holiness and obedience.

And here, once more, on the Cross, I see the pledge and proof of God's infinite love. He has not cast me away from Him into the outer darkness. He has not despised, or hated, or forgotten me in the shame and degradation of my sin. He has loved me, and sent His own Son to die for me, and redeem me to Himself. Just is He and altogether righteous, but He is also forgiving and merciful. Who can measure the blessed life-giving power which flows from this revelation of the heart of God upon the Cross of Calvary? It kindles our desires and our hopes. It sweeps away the mighty barrier of doubt and dread, and draws us gently but resistlessly to our Father's breast. It speaks to every fallen, downcast, trembling child of man, saying, "Fear not, for I am thy God

and thy Redeemer; and though thou hast lost all beside, my love is still thine, if thou wilt take refuge here.”

Can we doubt, or refuse such an invitation? When the prodigal son was returning from his life of sin and sorrow, with that penitent confession upon his lips, ready to take the lowest and meanest place among his father's servants, I can well believe that his heart was still troubled with fears and forebodings. What right had he to come back? What claim had he upon his father's favor? As he drew near to the house he may well have trembled, and stood still, and turned to go away. But when his father ran to meet him, and threw his kind arms about his neck, then all doubt was swept away, and he knew that he was loved.

In the Cross of Christ God is forever coming down to meet His sinful children, even while yet they are yet a great way off. His arms of love are cast about us. We are drawn to His forgiving heart. A great calm falls upon our weary souls. We have peace with God, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

VI.

THE LIVING CHRIST.

VI.

REVELATION i. 18. *I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

THE world needs more than a Redeemer. It needs a Master, a Ruler, a living Lord.

When the guilt of sin has been taken away by the perfect sacrifice of the cross, when the inexorable law of righteousness has been satisfied and the barrier between man and God forever destroyed by the death of Jesus, the way of salvation is indeed made free and clear, but the work of salvation is not yet accomplished. There must be a continuous exercise of divine power upon the weakened and perverted hearts of men ; there must be an uplifting, and quickening and guiding of the world by an ever-living and ever-present Saviour.

Therefore the resurrection is a necessary part of the plan of redemption. God could

not leave Christ's soul in Hades, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. For then, although the sacrifice on Calvary was complete and sufficient, it would have been lost in the darkness of the grave. It would never have rescued the world from death. It would have made salvation possible but not actual. Passing into history, it would have left the record, that although the justice of God was vindicated in the perfect satisfaction of the law, and although the mercy of God was revealed in the sending of His own Son to die for sinners, yet, for all that, mankind was lost, for want of a living and abiding Christ.

I pray you to mark this truth. A dead Christ can never save us. Even though He be crucified for us, even though our sins be laid upon Him and our curse borne in His body on the tree, even though we behold Him delivered for our offences and slain for our redemption, — a dead Christ upon the cross can never save us.

There must be the living Christ in our hearts. He must be raised again for our

justification. The sepulchre must give Him back to us. The dark under-world, into which He descended for our sakes, must restore Him to our faith and fellowship. Yea, the heaven from which He came must receive Him, that He may be clothed once more with the glory which He laid aside at His birth, that He may no more be humbled to the narrow confines of a servant's form and a servant's life, but reigning in restored omniscience and omnipotence and omnipresence, may manifest throughout the world His wisdom and His power to save to the uttermost all that call upon Him.

This, then, is the glorious meaning of the resurrection. It is the divine answer to the soul's cry for a living Saviour. It is the revelation of One who was subject to the power of death willingly and for a season, not of necessity and forever. It is the shining-forth of the bright and changeless Sun of Righteousness, conquering the dark grave-clouds and rejoicing as a strong man to run His everlasting race of glory and blessing. It is the assurance to the world

that the Son of Man did not perish in His attempt to redeem humanity, but won the victory in the shadowy realm of death, vanquishing the great adversary, capturing captivity; and henceforth He is manifested as Jesus Christ the Son of God, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

You see, now, why the Church built upon this fact of the resurrection as the cornerstone of her faith. You see why she made it the great theme of her preaching to proclaim Jesus and the resurrection. You see why she chose not Friday, the day on which Christ died, but Sunday, the day on which He rose from the dead, as her holy-day of rest and gladness. Not because the resurrection is more sacred or more important than the crucifixion; but because, without the resurrection, the crucifixion would be an unutterable and irremediable loss, the disappearance of the most holy life and character that the world has ever seen, the vanishing forever from the earth of the most precious power that has ever entered it, yes, the seal of failure upon the work of

Christ and the annihilation of all our hopes of immortality and heaven, for "if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." But if He be risen then our faith is sure. Then the triumph of love and life over sin and death is accomplished and secure. Then the dawning of every Lord's day that shines upon our darkened earth brings to us a bright and glad reminder of that eternal light which the grave itself could not quench, — that light which even now fills the heavens as it fills our hearts, — the light of the glory of God shining for evermore in the face of Christ Jesus.

To this light I ask you to turn your eyes. Away from all that is transitory and perishing, away from all that is threatened by change and shadowed by decay, away from all that feels the power of mortal pain and sorrow and dissolution, let us look to Him that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore and hath the keys of hell and of death. Let us rest our souls upon the reality of the living Christ.

I. Consider, in the first place, the glorious certainty of the fact that on the third day after His death, He left the grave and came forth alive into the living world. This fact I say is a glorious certainty. There is no event in history so well attested. If we can be sure of anything in the past we can be sure of this.

We know that Christ is risen because His sepulchre is empty. Where is He gone? What power has broken the imperial seal of Rome, and rolled away the ponderous stone from the mouth of the tomb? The feeble, scattered, trembling disciples who fled in terror when they saw Him condemned to die? Impossible. Physically impossible, that they should have braved and baffled and overcome the power of the world-empire as it was embodied in those stern and vigilant soldiers guarding the seal which it was death to touch. Morally impossible, that these men, whose character was so pure and true that the world owes to them its spiritual regeneration, should ever have stooped to an act of the basest

deceit, should ever have stolen away their Master's body by craft, and then adhered with unalterable pertinacity to a falsehood whose only consequence was to expose them to the world's bitterest hatred and persecution. Men do not steal or lie without a motive. What motive could have induced the disciples of Christ to perpetrate such a fiction as this, — a fiction which must have separated them forever from their Master, whose words were purity and truth, — a fiction which involved the sacrifice of all that they held dearest on earth, their former religion, their homes, their friends, their property, their peace, their lives? Do you believe that men will make such sacrifices for a baseless and fruitless lie? Incredible. By the stone rolled away, by the vacant sepulchre, by the deserted grave-clothes, we know that Christ Himself has left the tomb.

We know it also by the testimony of many unimpeachable witnesses who saw Jesus in the flesh after He had risen, — men and women who were in no condition to see

a vision of exalted fancy, for the dreadful gloom of the crucifixion, the strong impression of that visible and unmistakable death, still rested on their minds. They had seen Him with their own eyes as He hung upon the cross. They had watched the heavings of His suffering breast, and seen the pallor settling on His brow. They had heard the last cry of agony and triumph, and beheld the wounded head fall upon His bosom. They had seen the spear thrust into His side, and felt the dead weight of His body as they lifted it from the accursed tree and laid it reverently in the rock-hewn sepulchre. They had come, — as soon as the Sabbath was passed and He had been so long dead that His enemies would feel no fear in admitting them to His sepulchre, — they had come very early in the morning of the first day of the week, not with any hope or thought of seeing Him alive, but with sweet spices that they might tenderly embalm His dead body. Were these the people to dream dreams or see ghosts? Were these the hearts in which such a

magnificent and startling conception as the resurrection could create itself out of nothing, and, in spite of the sorrowful evidence of a memory but three days old, force them to believe in its reality? I tell you these women and these disciples knew the facts of Jesus' death only too well; and nothing but *a fact* could have made them believe that He was alive again.

They tell us that they saw the risen Jesus. And mark the manner in which they saw Him. They do not tell us that Christ appeared to them in trances or midnight visions of ecstasy, but in the common walks of daily life, in the garden of the Arimathean Joseph, on the high-road to Emmäus, by the sea-shore where they were busy with their fishing. He talked with them, ate with them, they touched Him. They do not relate marvelous tales of garments rustling and features dimly gleaming in the shade of darkened rooms. In the cool hours of the early morning, under the searching sunlight, in the open air, Jesus comes to them. They do not tell us only of what

was seen by solitary wanderers in their lonely hours; but they assure us that He was seen of more than five hundred brethren at one time, in the clear daylight. And this assurance was written, not long afterwards when all of the alleged beholders were dead, but within less than thirty years after the death of Christ, when many of the eye-witnesses still lived and could bear testimony to its truthfulness. These are not the words of madness or deceit. They are calm and dispassionate narratives which bear the tests of evidence. They cannot be explained on any other supposition than the reality of the resurrection.

Moreover, we know that Christ is risen because the faith in His resurrection has produced such vast and enduring results in the world. It is on the strength of this fact that His religion has been accepted and has won its mighty triumphs in the world. A French philosopher was once complaining to a friend that although he had invented a most beautiful religion, he could not persuade any one to believe it.

“I will tell you what you shall do,” said the friend; “*you shall get yourself crucified and rise again on the third day from the dead; then every one will believe it.*”

In this keen reply a great truth lies hidden. The secret of Christianity is the reality of the resurrection. This is the fountain-head to which we may trace the stream of its success. By this stupendous fact we see, first of all, the disciples transformed from trembling, doubting cowards, overwhelmed with disappointment and despair, into brave, confident soldiers, full of zeal, courage, strength. We see the faith which had obtained, during the years of Christ's ministry in the flesh, but a few hundred adherents, suddenly winning in a single day three thousand souls. We see those who had been cold, mistrustful, hostile toward Jesus changed into His ardent disciples, and setting forth without misgiving to conquer the world for Him. We see the resurrection-faith sweeping like a flood of light over land and sea, conquering all obstacles, gaining cities and tribes and whole nations for its

own, and covering the earth with countless spires, each one of which points up to heaven as a silent witness that Christ is risen.

Are not these vast and innumerable cemeteries of the world, crowded with the memorials of a deathless hope even in the face of death, evidences of the reality of the resurrection? Is not this long line of more than ninety thousand Christian Sundays stretching back like a row of shining, glorious, immovable pillars to the garden of the Arimathean, a monument to the reality of the resurrection? Yes, we know that it is true. Because the darkness is broken and the shadows flee away from the soul of man, because the clouds that hang above the grave are touched with light and glory, because the flowers of faith and love and hope and holiness have unclosed their folded leaves and blossomed around the earth, we know that the Sun, even the Lord Christ, is risen.

But if we need another evidence, we have it in the testimony of those who have seen the risen Saviour in the splendor of His

heavenly existence. Three men, pure, sober, trustworthy, have beheld in the flesh this majestic vision, and left the record of what they saw for our faith to build upon.

Stephen, the first martyr, dying amid the stones and curses of his enemies, looked upward, and saw the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

Saul of Tarsus, journeying to Damascus on his mission of persecution and death to the Christians, was smitten to the ground in the cloudless noonday by a light far above the brightness of the sun, and beheld in the midst of the glory the form of that Jesus whom he persecuted.

John, dwelling in lonely exile on the rocky isle of Patmos, was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard a mighty voice like the sound of many waters, and saw, in the heart of an undescrivable radiance, one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a splendor so majestic that John fell at his feet as dead. But the Lord laid His right hand upon him and said, "Fear not: I am the first and the

last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Yes, it is the same who once hung upon the cross in agony and shame so great that the sun hid his face in horror; it is the same who was wrapped in the grave-clothes and laid in the darkness of the sepulchre; it is the same whom His disciples mourned as the lost Hope of Israel, and for whose embalmment the sorrowing women brought sweet spices on that Sunday morning eighteen hundred years ago; it is the same Jesus now crowned with honor and glory at the right hand of God. This is He that liveth and was dead. The grave-clothes could not bind Him, the tomb could not stay Him, the under-world could not contain Him. He has risen, He has ascended up on high, and behold He is alive for evermore, Amen.

II. Consider, in the second place, the nature and evidences of this everlasting life which belongs to the risen Christ. Clearly it must be a reality, not a mere ideal or

imaginary existence. And just as clearly it must be a mysterious and incomprehensible reality. We cannot look with our feeble and darkened eyes into the heavenly regions. We cannot discern or understand the manner of life in which the ascended Lord now dwells. We cannot tell how He looks, or in what glorious activities He is employed, or in what shining place His blessed throne is established.

“Jesus, these eyes have never seen
That radiant form of Thine ;
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Thy blessed face and mine.”

But one thing we do know, one thing we may be sure of:—the life of the risen Christ, reaching away out into the endless future, with all the power of sympathy and help won by His earthly experience, with all the might and glory of His victory over sin and death, abiding and growing through ages of ages, — this divine immortal life is for evermore a life for men, a life of succor and comfort, blessing and salvation, flowing out in heavenly grace and power into this sorrowful and sinful earth.

Here we touch the reality on its human side. Here we find that which we can know and understand. Here, in the moral and spiritual life of man, we behold the evidences of the living Christ, still dwelling and working in the world which He died to redeem.

Observe the bearing of this argument. We rely for the proof of the historical fact that Christ rose from the dead upon historical evidence. We rely for the proof of the spiritual fact that Christ is alive for evermore upon spiritual evidence. But the two facts correspond and are linked together. If Christ be not risen, then all the inward life of Christendom is a dream, a delusion, a lie. But if Christ be risen, then all the influences of purity and love and goodness that are working in the hearts of men, all the heavenly hopes and aspirations and endeavors of the world, are the proofs and revelations of His present and everlasting life.

Is the Gospel still an active and potent force in the world, quickening men who are

dead in trespasses and sins, converting them, building them up in righteousness and love, enlightening them with heavenly wisdom, and comforting them with heavenly grace? It is because the voice of the living Christ still speaks in it. Are the Sacraments filled with spiritual life and strength, satisfying and nourishing the soul with divine food? It is because they are made the channels of the power of the living Christ. Is the Church alive, throbbing and glowing with faith and love, laboring earnestly and patiently for the salvation of men, shining with a more than earthly radiance, aspiring, hoping, struggling upward, sending out from her warm, deep heart the streams of pity and compassion and unselfish charity without which this world would be an unendurable desert? It is because she is the body of the living Christ. If He were dead she must perish. But because He is alive she lives also.

Wherever human hearts are reaching up from the shadows of this mortal sphere to lay hold upon the eternal God, wherever

the pure flowers of truth and peace and holiness are springing from the dull and barren soil of humanity, wherever men and women are suffering patiently, toiling nobly, giving themselves generously for the good of others, wherever the Holy Ghost is working, wherever faith is burning, wherever love is shining, *there is the living Christ.*

All light and power and goodness come from Him. The Divine Spirit who keeps the world from death, who quickens in our hearts the mysterious heavenly life, is His messenger and witness, proceeding not from the Father only, but from the Father and the Son. He reveals unto us not a dead Christ, but the living Christ; and we know the truth of Paul's saying, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

"Christ in us the hope of glory," — this is no dream, no fable, but a blessed reality.

There is not a power which He exercised,

there is not a quality which He manifested, in His earthly ministry, which He is not exercising and manifesting to-day in the hearts of men. Did He rule then with gracious power over the souls of the few who knew and loved Him? He is reigning to-day over thousands and tens of thousands of living hearts who would gladly die for the honor of His name. Did He restore the sick and comfort the sorrowing? He is giving life and health to-day to many a penitent sinner, and pouring His consolations like balm into many a wounded and suffering spirit. Did He give rest to the weary and heavy-laden? His peace is still flowing like a river into many a troubled soul, His voice is still hushing the storms of grief and passion, His benediction is still resting upon our hearts even as His kind hands once rested on the heads of the little children at His knee.

“In joy of inward peace, or sense
Of sorrow over sin,
He is His own best evidence;
His witness is within.

“ No fable old, nor mythic lore,
Nor dream of bards and seers ;
No dead fact stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years, —

“ But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He ;
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

“ The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain ;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

“ O Lord and Master of us all,
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine.

“ Apart from Thee all gain is loss,
All labor vainly done ;
The solemn shadow of Thy cross
Is better than the sun.

“ Alone, O Love ineffable,
Thy saving name is given ;
To turn aside from Thee is hell, —
To walk with Thee is heaven.”

III. Finally, let us remember that this risen Christ, who liveth and was dead and is

alive for evermore, is He who holds the keys of hell and of death.

Oh, that I could find the power to express the joy and comfort which dwell in this majestic truth !

It has been well said, by one who speaks always to the heart, that there are many doors about us in the world, — doors of joy and sorrow, doors of labor and suffering, doors of success and failure. And as our lives go on we are passing through them one by one ; we are finding out what lies behind them ; our experience is putting into our hand the keys which unlock them and disclose their secrets. But there is one door which baffles us. Dark, cold, forbidding, it stands in the midst of this green and beautiful world, — the iron door of death. All the paths of mortal life lead thither ; but there is none that returns from that mysterious portal. We see men and women and little children vanishing within its gloom ; year by year, those that are nearest and dearest are passing away from us over that stern threshold ; but not one

of them comes back to us to tell us what is beyond. Our own footsteps are drawing near to it: we cannot shun or escape it: a heavy hand is on us pushing us forward. Through the flowers and sunshine, through the thorns and tempests, through every year and every day, we are moving toward that iron door.

We tremble. We are afraid. Our hearts are chilled and darkened by the awful mystery. Who will open this door for us? Who will show us the things which lie behind it? Who will unlock and disclose the mystery of death?

Behold the living Christ. He has passed through that shadowy portal, and has come back again. He holds the keys of the grave and of the under-world. He stands beside us in the hour of fear and grief. He touches the heavy door and it swings open. We see the inner side of it, and lo! *it is not of iron but of gold, for it is the door of the heavenly city.* Dark is the entrance of that gateway, but just within its shadow lies the world of light. Lonely is the brief passage

to the eye of mortal sense, but the moment of parting is the moment of meeting with God, and Jesus, and the innumerable company of angels and ransomed saints.

Stoop down and look through that narrow opening, O mourning heart, and you shall see that those whom you bewail as lost are dwelling in peace and blessedness, and waiting for you to join them. Weep no more. Rejoice, be glad, and sing. The mystery of death is solved. The shadow of death is broken. For those who are in Christ, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. This life of ours is no brief and transient stream, flowing turbidly through a few short years, and then sinking in the grave. It is immortal, glorious, blessed. Through the dark portal it passes instantly into light and peace.

Are the birds singing here with joyous melody? *Yonder the angels are singing forever about the throne.*

Are the flowers blooming here in fragrance and beauty? *Yonder the tree of life is blossoming beside the crystal waters.*

Is the sun shining here in majesty and glory? *Yonder the face of Christ is shining, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.*



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