SERMONS AND ESSAYS

BY

FRANCIS T. WASHBURN.

WITH

EXTRACTS FROM A MEMORIAL PAMPHLET.

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NOTE.

It is endeavored in this volume to preserve some memorials of one who died before he had become widely known, but who lived long enough to grow very dear to some. These pages, gathered by the hand of his wife, may help such as loved him to recall the utterances of a singularly gentle, faithful and wise spirit, wholly dedicated to the truth. They will bear testimony, also, to the impression which he made upon some kindred minds that knew him well.

His friends will, perhaps, be helped by the photograph, however imperfectly, to bring to mind again that face, so full of grace and truth — the face of a saint and a scholar, — which was always, in itself, a beautiful sermon.

It was intended to say something further in this place of the qualities of Mr. Washburn's mind and character which have made it seem well to preserve this record of him. But after considering again the tender and discriminating estimate which Dr. Morison has given of his young colleague, and the other tributes to his memory which are found in the following pages, it seems but an idle thing to say more.

J. B. T.

June, 1876.

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FRANCIS TUCKER WASHBURN.

*Extracts from Memorial Pamphlet.**

We must ask the indulgence of our readers, if we should seem to them to give way too much to our personal feelings in the space which we set apart here to the memory of a very dear friend, who was only just beginning to indicate the place which his rare qualities of mind and character must soon have enabled him to take among us. When a distinguished man, whose life has been given to the best things, passes from us in the fulness of years and honors, having finished the work which was given him to do, we bow reverently and silently, leaving his works to speak for him. The community in which he has lived will do justice to his memory. But when a young man of uncommon gifts and

*The discourse of the Rev. Dr. Morison delivered at the funeral of Mr. Washburn on January 2, 1874, was printed in the *Monthly Religious Magazine* for the following February, accompanied by some "prefatory remarks" written by Dr. Morison himself. These remarks, together with the sermon and certain other matters, were reprinted by the Milton parish in a memorial pamphlet. In quoting now from this pamphlet, the compiler has taken leave to add the closing portions of the article by the Rev. Mr. Mumford, to which Dr. Morison refers, and from which he had quoted the earlier sentences only.

graces dies before his work is fairly begun, only those who lived in intimate relations with him can know how great the promise was, or how great the loss. And therefore there is, as in Tennyson's "In Memoriam," a desire to say more than what he has actually done might seem to justify.

In Edmund Burke's pathetic reference to the death of his son, after speaking of his superiority "in science, in erudition, in genius, in taste, in honor, in generosity, in humanity, in every liberal sentiment and every liberal accomplishment," he says, "he had in himself a salient, living spring of generous and manly action." Then, his feeling of personal grief overcome by his sense of calamity which had fallen upon the community, he adds, "In this exigent moment, the loss of a finished man is not easily supplied."

The loss of a finished man — a man of decided ability, of education, of singular purity and honor, giving his mind to the highest studies, and his life to the highest interests of man and of society — is a loss which no one of us can justly estimate. The finer elements of mind and character which come as original endowments to such a man, the wider, richer, grander influences of education, in its broadest sense, by which those gifts of nature are enlarged, enriched, and refined, and the singleness of purpose with which all are devoted to the purest ends, are so costly and precious in themselves and in their relation to the highest good of

society, that we cannot subject them to any ordinary standard or method of valuation. And if this "finished man" is yet in the morning of life, with all its opportunities of personal improvement and advancing usefulness before him, our knowledge of what he was is but the starting point from which we look forward to the thought of what he might have been, if time and life only had been granted to him.

It is with feelings of this sort — a sense of loss which grows upon us as we think of it, from week to week — that we speak here of a young man who held no prominent position before the public, and whose sole ambition was to do his duty, no matter in how lowly a sphere, day by day, and to make some progress in his spiritual life through a better knowledge of the truth, and a more perfect obedience to it.

Francis T. Washburn was born in Boston, Sept. 24, 1843. He was graduated at Harvard University in 1864. He studied law six months in the office of his father, William R. P. Washburn. But he had a drawing to what he regarded as a wider and more sacred field of learning. He was in the Cambridge Divinity School one year, when he was called away by the ill-health of a sister to travel with her in Europe, where he remained three years. During those years his first object was the care of his sister, whose health at times was such as to cause him extreme solicitude. It was only

at broken intervals that he was able to pursue his studies abroad. But the opportunities for mental and æsthetic improvement were not lost to him. Soon after his return home he began to preach, with habits of study, with religious experiences and knowledge, much beyond what is usually possessed by young men entering the ministry. But the special training for the work of his profession was incomplete. If he had gone back to the Divinity School, and for a year or two pursued his studies under the direction of the very able corps of teachers there, he would have begun his work as a preacher under far more favorable auspices. The practical exercises of the school, with the criticisms attending them, would have added greatly to his skill in the selection and treatment of subjects, and to his facility of expression and power of utterance in the pulpit.

He was ordained associate minister of the First Congregational Parish in Milton, on the second of March, 1871. He was married the first of January, 1873, and died on the twenty-ninth of December, leaving "his dearly beloved wife to mourn his loss before the first anniversary of their marriage had come round." He was in his parish less than three years. Many of his sermons were only experiments in sermon writing, — studies rather than finished works. They revealed the processes of doubt and inquiry by which he was working his way into a deeper comprehension, and a clearer and more

effective expression, of truth on the greatest of all subjects. His hearers were made to sympathize with him, painfully sometimes, in the difficulties which he had to overcome. But those who attended his church constantly, and who became most familiar with his methods of thought, found the way clearing up before them, and views of divine truth opening to them with new distinctness and power. There was no excitement, no parade of sensational subjects, or use of sensational language. The single-minded minister of Christ, who had spent the week in his study searching through all its environments into the truth, came to his people on Sunday with the results of his week's work. Sometimes the results seemed to them and to him very unsatisfactory. But they were helpful, nevertheless, to him and them, as leading honest and truthful minds on through these temporary stages and processes of thought to grand and soul-satisfying truths.

Few ministers, in so short a time, have taken up so many difficult subjects to throw so much light upon them. The progress which he made from year to year was very remarkable. Not three months ago we heard him preach one of his earliest sermons, and on the following Sunday a sermon which he had just written. There was an immense distance between the two, in fulness and freshness of thought, in depth of Christian feeling, in freedom and power of expression, and in

that mellowing harmony and richness of style which come only from the deepest and holiest experiences of life. We felt that he was just beginning to preach. With his habits and methods of study, with his single eye to the truth, and his love of truth and devotion to it for its own sake, he seemed to us, more than any other young man that we knew, to be the one who should lay open to the rising generation among us the great truths of our religion, as can be done only by a thorough scholar and thinker, with delicate sympathies, and an ever-enlarging Christian consciousness. What he did was but the budding promise of what he might have done.

It is a comfort to think of the impression which this young man has made during his brief ministry on some of the best minds among us. The Rev. Nathaniel Hall, of Dorchester, in his New Year's Sermon, said: —

> Of one other, added to the year's dead, within the very last of its days, my heart urges me to speak, whose early manhood was full of the best promise, as was his heart of a sweet and winning goodness, and his life — so far as I was privileged to know it — of a consecrated fidelity. I refer to the young minister of Milton.
>
> There is to me a peculiar sadness in his death, — like what we might feel in a bright and cloudless morning enwrapped in sudden night, only that faith assures us that *his* morning is brightening on, where night and cloud are not, towards the Perfect Day.

The following is from a notice of him, written for the *Norfolk County Gazette*, by one of his most faithful and intelligent parishioners: —

It is a very great loss which the town of Milton suffers in the death of this pure-hearted and faithful minister. He was a man of public spirit, and attended to all the duties of a good citizen. He was present at the primary political meetings and at town-meetings, and took his full share of service on the school committee. The clock upon the old meeting-house — the first striking clock that the town ever had, and placed there by his exertions — will long remind the citizens of Milton, as it tells the passing hours, of his generous and laborious efforts to serve them.

The graces of his personal presence and character will be cherished in the remembrance of many persons. He had a singular simplicity and sweetness in his demeanor, in which there was always at the same time a reserve and gentle dignity, that told of a secret strength, and of resources not disclosed to every eye. His intellect was clear, vigorous, well-trained, cautious, free from illusions. The great preëminent longing of his soul was for the truth, — the truth wherever it might lead him; and this bred in him a sweet humility and openness of mind such as are seldom seen. Never did any one hold his opinions in a sweeter temper and tone of mind. He never dogmatized; he often doubted, but seldom denied.

His mere presence in the pulpit was a source of refinement and spiritual culture to all who saw him. Many lamented as they looked upon that slender frame

that he had not a greater vigor of body. But in this very weakness the power of his soul was manifest, and there were those among his people who could hardly ever witness without moistening eyes the spectacle of his simple devotion, and the kindling of the pure flame of his saintly and aspiring soul.

A truthful and beautiful notice of Mr. Washburn appeared in the *Christian Register*, written by his neighbor and friend, Rev. T. J. Mumford, in which it is said: —

He was a man born to be loved and honored, but it took time and somewhat thorough acquaintance to reveal the wealth of his mind, the warmth of his heart, and the nobility of his high spirit. His face was one of almost maidenly purity and delicacy, and his bearing was marked by a modest reserve; but few men are so strong and brave and true, or meet the trials of life with stouter souls. Never profuse in his professions, always regarding the sacred privacies of individual natures, when there was warrant for his sympathy, or need of his help, he was a friend indeed. Those who confided in him found that they "put their nests in a rock."

In intellectual power and extensive attainments he had few equals among our younger ministers. There was no taint of superficiality in his scholarly tastes or aims. Everything that he printed was characterized by scrupulous accuracy, and the most magnanimous wish to be just to opponents. The frequent hesitation in his utterance was probably occasioned by his conscientious desire to speak the truth. Therefore he was

satisfied with no word which did not really represent his thought. We do not believe that a sincerer person has ever lived.

Interested in education, and faithful to his trust as a member of the school committee, he gave himself chiefly to the work of his profession. We heard him preach only twice, and one of the sermons chanced to be the last that he ever delivered. Both these discourses were exceedingly able and impressive, and we shall never forget some of their leading passages. He was one of the men that we like to see in the pulpit; in whose preparation of mind and soul we had unbounded confidence; and to whose influence we surrendered ourselves with a delightful sense of spiritual security. Nothing was done for effect. It was impossible to suspect him of cant or any kind of overstatements. He bore witness only to such truths as he knew and loved and was. We went away, not admiring graceful gestures or artful tones, but hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

His relations to his senior colleague were so cordial and satisfactory that they filled the whole neighborhood with the fragrance of affection. When we saw them, each seeking not his own, but the other's, welfare, we said to ourselves, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" This exquisite spectacle has done much to remove a great doubt of the modern ministry, in which both young and old clergymen have so often confessed themselves incapable of the generous forbearance and the filial and fraternal love required to prevent rivalry and discord between colleagues. In Milton, if nowhere

else, could be found a young man looking with unfeigned satisfaction upon every token of reverence and gratitude toward his senior, and an old man stimulating confidence and hope towards his junior, as if his daily life were a cheerful sermon from the text, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

The following extracts are from a letter sent to Mr. Washburn's family by the Boston Association of Ministers: —

We felt in him the power of a strong, true soul, high-minded in the least as in the greatest things, pure as the snow, single in purpose, of a consecrated fidelity, untiring, unselfish. A courtesy born of Christian loving kindness, a rare refinement, the humility of a servant of the Truth, the gentleness of a spirit which respected others, the frank sincerity of a spirit which respected himself, the holiness of a devout lover of God and of good, shone on us in his face, and made it as the face of an angel.

The counsel of his measured speech, weighty with ripe meditation, the scholarly conscience which guided his studies, the vigor of his thought and candor of his mind, the Christian sweetness and light which he breathed, and which he *was*, taught us to anticipate from him rich fruits of garnered knowledge, and were an inspiration to his brethren, alike by the sincerity with which he sought for Truth, and by the joy with which he found it.

And his love of his high calling helped us, the oldest as well as the youngest, to see afresh its opportunities of service and sacrifice.

We close our extracts from others with a poem written by the Rev. H. C. Badger: —

FRANCIS T. WASHBURN.

[The Norfolk Conference met with the Milton Church, October, 1875. Those present will recall the day, the theme, and the discussion.]

Sweet soul, I think of thee
As we last met, when Milton's wooded slopes
October gorgeously
Flooded with light; and when thy face, more bright
Even than its wont, shone with thy spirit's light,
The while we sought to prove
Which better keeps and cheers a people's hopes,
Faith, Holiness, or Love.

"We need the three!" you cried;
"Faith as the root, — the others stem and crown."
"And, lo!" I said, "beside
This servant's right hand, on this church's wall,
The crowning words, — 'The first command of all
Is love to man and God:'
To quicken Thought and Work the words look down,
As sunbeams cheer the sod."

We thought not then of Death!
But had the fading glory of that day
Been as God's voice which saith
To startled hearts, "Choose ye a messenger,
One without spot or blemish, fit to bear
And be first fruits to me,"
Hearing, had they turned quickly to obey,
Who had not turned to thee?

Go, thou, most sweet, most rare!
Another's life were done,
Gone from our vision; but while thou art there,

Still art thou here: thy grace, thy gentleness,
Thy love, the marvellous sweetness of thy face,
Thy courteous sympathy:
Graces and virtues which in thee were one
Heaven suffers not to die.

Quick in our hearts thou art
Already rooted, an undying joy,
An ever-living part!
Deep grief is ours, but deeper gratitude
Beside, that we have known a soul so good!
Sweeter shall all things be;
Truth lovelier; Life a greater harmony
Interpreted by thee!

DISCOURSE BY REV. J. H. MORISON, D. D.,

SENIOR PASTOR OF THE PARISH.

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."—JOHN i., 47.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."—MATT. v., 8.

"If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."—MATT. vi., 22.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."—I. JOHN iii., 2, 3.

These words bring before us the image of our friend, and carry us with him very far into the kingdom of heaven.

A little less than three years ago we met here, by appropriate and solemn rites, to set apart as a minister of Christ a young man who was little known to most of

us. Gradually we came to feel that the public services had been full of significance, because preceded and followed by the secret, continual, and entire consecration, which he was making of himself to his great and sacred calling. We welcomed him as a stranger, and by gentle approaches he has been winning his way to our hearts, and now we begin to see that we were entertaining unawares an angel of truth and mercy, who in all these months has been laboring among us to bring God's kingdom of righteousness and peace and love more truly into our lives. And so to-day, on the threshold of a new year, before its subdued greetings have quite died away, we come here, with flowers and kindly offices, with loving, trusting affections, with hymns and prayers and tearful benedictions, to bid farewell to as truthful, as gentle, as pure, unselfish, devout, and loving a spirit as we have ever known. God be with us in this time of our bereavement.

For nearly three years he has been here doing the work of a Christian minister. He loved his profession and all its duties. No member of the parish was too remote or too obscure to awaken a genuine interest in him. If there had been more self-assertion in his personal bearing, and more of show in his manner of preaching, he would perhaps have produced more decided and immediate results. But then we could not feel towards him as we do now. He could not have grown into our affections and our confidence as he did. His life and conversation were so gentle and undemonstrative, his language was so simple and unexaggerated, that we sometimes failed to see how weighty and how pertinent the thought or the illustra-

tion was. Here was a man with an original mind, and with scholarly tastes and habits which must have made him a very learned man. Here was a man with a philosophical insight which took him at once to the centre of a great subject, and with strength of mind to hold it steadily before him while he made the nice discriminations which are essential in order to gain a just view of the truth. And then there was such perfect fairness of mind. A more truthful man never lived. In these great qualities, so rare at all times, and especially in these days of hastily formed and rashly uttered opinions, I know not where to find a young man to fill the place which he has left vacant in our profession. I hardly know of more than three or four men of any age among us who in these respects equalled him as a searcher after the highest truth. His essay "On the Communion of the Soul with God" is a model of philosophical thought, in its clear-sightedness, reaching down into the depths of a great and difficult subject, while it is not less remarkable for its nice distinctions and the spiritual intuitions by which it takes us up from simple elementary principles to the loftiest and most inspiring results. I do not wonder that it was translated by a very intelligent gentleman, and circulated in Germany as admirably adapted to the exacting and discriminating mind of German students.

But this is not the place or the time to analyze his character. We would rather give way to our affections, and think of him as he rises before us in the duties of his sacred calling, and in the daily intercourse and offices of life. He came among us a thoughtful, thoroughly educated man, with very modest pretensions for

himself, but with great ideas of what a Christian life and a Christian minister should be. And every year we could see that he was entering more deeply into the mind and heart of Christ, that he was taking up into his own nature more and more of divine truth, that his spiritual vision was growing clearer and broader, and that in his daily conversation, through great accessions of happiness and great sorrows, he was transformed more and more into the image of Christ. There was an increasing tenderness, a softening pathos about him, a bowing down of spirit as if under the sense of weightier cares and obligations. But we did not think that he was ripening so fast for other realms of being. He was a true, brave man. I could not see that the thought of himself, or of consequences to himself, ever had the slightest influence either on his judgment or his conduct. He had so subordinated himself to the higher rules of living, that it seemed no longer a sacrifice to give up his personal wishes or interests. He was as docile as a child in listening to suggestions, but in his adherence to his matured convictions as calm and as firm as the polar star.

But, after all, the strength of his nature lay in his affections. With all his love of philosophical investigation, with all his scholarly tastes, and his joy in the higher walks of literature and art, with his sensitive and almost fastidious refinement of sentiment, his affections were more to him than all the rest. It was his love to man and God that made this place so dear and sacred to him. Human beings were more to him than abstract truths. A human soul, in the full and perfect development of all its powers, through the

indwelling presence and spirit of God as he saw it in the great head of our humanity, was to him the truest emblem or revelation that he could have of the divine mind.

He loved to recognize the old-fashioned ties of kindred and neighborhood, and the delicate offices and relationships which grow out of them, and bind a whole community together as one living organism. He loved his friends. He lived in them. The members of his family were only more sacred portions of his own being. He felt a sort of obligation to any one who had ever been connected with them. Some of us saw how he devoted himself to an old dependent upon his father's family, who had been broken down by intemperance, and whose claims upon his means, his time, and his strength, he held binding while he lived, and till he had seen him with fitting services laid in his grave.

He loved his friends and neighbors. He loved his brethren in the ministry. He loved to see those whom he met in our conferences and social gatherings. He did not put his feelings into words. But he loved to be where young people and children were. He was always thoughtful for others. His actions, his bearing towards them, his yearning, though often hesitating, manner of approach, his courtesy which never failed him, his gentle dignity, the mark of a lofty, lowly spirit, his look, and the tones of his voice, showed the reality and depth and tenderness of his personal feelings.

During his sickness, when hardly conscious of anything else, he often showed his thoughtfulness for others, and the feeling of thankfulness was evidently

uppermost in his thoughts. Only a few hours before he died, he seemed to think that he was in the church with his friends, and with affecting earnestness he said, "I can scarcely speak, — I can scarcely open my mouth. I want to thank you before we part. I have been deeply touched — touched to the heart — to find how knit together we are in love. I must thank you, friends. Ever since the beginning of my sickness, kindness has poured in upon me from every side, and I have found nothing but helpfulness."

In the last sermon that I heard from him, the last but one that he ever preached, are these words, which may fittingly be applied to himself: "Meekness, humility, patience, simple truthfulness, and modesty, — to these virtues it sometimes seems to me as though our times were specially blind. But doubtless there is something in the nature of these rare and fragrant virtues which hides them from the public gaze. They are, rather, private, personal, intimate, known only of those who feel their blessing. Virtue is indeed its own reward. There is in every worthy trait of character a native beauty. To live worthily is life in the true sense. Our moral nature feels itself true when it is living in accordance with the moral law, and rejoices in the harmony. Here upon earth, the good and faithful souls build the unseen kingdom, which is not of this world, though present in it, — here they build the unseen kingdom not for themselves alone, but for all who, led by right desire, seek to join them in their faithful life. And looking at the hearts of these faithful ones, and at their works, we are persuaded that the kingdom which they form and build is indeed the king-

dom of God. To the virtue and the grace which we behold in them there is something answering in us, something rooted deep in us, the mystery of faith and worship, which unites us with them in sympathy and hope, and turns our hearts with theirs to God. By bringing his truth into our lives, by uplifting our hearts with the highest faith and the best hopes to which we can attain, we may grow into that grace of spirit of which the special virtues are the fruit. And among these various fruits of the Spirit is this virtue of Patience, which begins with common tasks, but which rises gradually into a high, exalted grace, upholding the heart, healing evil, perfecting our life and work."

These are the last words that I ever heard our brother preach. "This virtue of Patience, which begins with common tasks, but which rises gradually into a high, exalted grace, upholding the heart, healing the evil, perfecting our life and work."

Even higher and better suited to our present needs are these other words of his: "When we pray, 'Thy will be done,' it is most frequently with the thought that the evil in us may be subdued, and our hearts resigned. But there is a higher consciousness than that, — to pray rejoicingly that God's will be done. In some rare moments in our own experience, in the lives of holier men, and, above all, in Jesus Christ, we see this rejoicing in the life of God, a conscious oneness of life with him. Thy will, thy glorious will, be done, sings the rejoicing heart. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, . . . for so it seems good in thy sight.' That glad oneness of life with God, and delight in his work, — that is the

communion with him towards which our prayers tend, that the eternal life, which by God's grace we hope may be revealed in us."

And has not this eternal life been revealed to us in him? Have we not recognized in him the workings of an immortal power, — the inward glow and calmness and depth of a life fed from the life of God in the hallowed and hidden experiences of his heart which can never die?

These flowers then are not placed here in bitter irony. They are to us the sweet and beautiful emblems of a life as sweet, as gentle, as pure and beautiful as themselves, and which, unlike themselves, shall live on forever. We therefore tenderly and lovingly commit the body of our dear brother to the ground — earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, — in sure and certain trust that he has already risen into the eternal life. Great indeed is the loss to us, — to the cause of sacred learning, and thus the whole Church of Christ. Great is the loss to us all in this town, but especially to the members of this congregation who were beginning to understand his worth, and to love and honor and almost to reverence him. I dare not trust myself to speak of what he has been to me, and of what I had hoped that he might still be, till he should be called to do for me what I am now so poorly fitted to do for him. Of the loss in still nearer and closer relations, I dare not even think, except with silent prayer to Him who alone can comfort and bless them.

But it is not all a loss. The life of such a man lives on in the hearts of those who loved him. It is an example and an inspiration. Such devotedness to man

and God, a soul so generous, so self-forgetting, must quicken a kindred spirit in other souls. And then we know not what offices of inspiration and instruction, what ministries of love and tenderness, reach down to earth from heaven to hallow the ground we tread and every sphere of life, to consecrate our church anew by a diviner spirit, and fill our homes and our hearts with the sweetness of hopes and affections breathed into them by dear and blessed messengers of God.

"I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you. Because I live, ye shall live also." "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with Him." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; even so, saith the spirit, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

THE NEW SCHOOL OF UNITARIANS.

I have waited patiently for some representative of what for lack of a better name I must call the new school of Unitarians, to take the stand and give evidence for his party with regard to the question now agitated in the denomination; but no one seems to have appeared, and so I feel constrained, since no one else will do it, to do it myself. A somewhat wide inquiry convinces me that the body to which I belong is large in numbers, and respectable in intelligence and character, and that while I can speak with full responsibility only for myself in any particular, my position, nevertheless, represents, in the main, that of a large proportion of our clergy and laity. May I ask you to listen to a statement of that position, begging you to supply from your own knowledge and reflection the deficiencies hardly avoidable in a scanty sketch of so large a matter?

We are not "original Unitarians." We are conscious that something of a distance exists between

our doctrines and those of Channing and the Unitarians of fifty years ago. Doubtless a different philosophy from theirs, though we may not know exactly what it is, is bound up with our theology. We do not find the expression which they give to their belief satisfying to us. Their language is not the natural and just expression of our thought. If we use it, we find that it does not fit our thought, but that we must fit our thought to it, a process usually attended with some strain to mind and conscience. Where we feel the strain most is in that general line of thought, indicated by the words supernatural, superhuman, infallible, authoritative, miraculous, and the like. In these directions the new school has drawn in its lines, if I may so say, or indulges in a shorter range of thought. The "original Unitarians," if I mistake not — I mean Channing and his school, — affirm Christ to be more than a "mere man," to be superhuman, to have supernatural powers, and supernatural authority. The "new school" is silent about that, for it confesses its inability to judge of the possibilities of the "mere man." If Christ can tell "mere men" to be perfect, as God is perfect, we, accepting that thought, do not feel justified in affirming him to be superhuman. We do not know the limits of the human. Though we believe Jesus to be unique in human history, we yet see no reason for taking him out of human history, or making him other than a man. With this view of the person of Jesus, is

connected our view of his words and acts. Absolute infallibility, and absolute perfection, and all else absolute, seem to us incompatible with human conditions. "There is none good"—absolutely good—"but one, that is God." Again, that Christ had supernatural powers, or supernatural authority, or was the author of a supernatural revelation, we cannot affirm, for we confess our inability to draw the line between the natural and the supernatural. We do not know the limits of the natural. We may say in general, also, that where the "original Unitarians" use absolute superlatives, we use relative superlatives. We do not, for instance, call Christ absolutely perfect; we do not take him out of comparison with mankind; we simply call him the most perfect of men. We are very shy of absolute terms, or of absolute thoughts.

With regard to the Bible, also, we hold an analogous position. While we consider it the unique book, we yet see no reason to take it out of human conditions. We know that men wrote it. We find proof in it of human imperfection. We accept its general teaching as authority; as having, besides its original weight, the sanction of many generations of the best and purest of men; but not as absolute or infallible authority, for that seems to us incompatible with human conditions. Holding as true the method of Biblical criticism which Dr. Noyes taught us—that is, the necessity of a critical and scientific examination of the Scriptures as

a step to a thorough knowledge of them, — we think this method not to have been as yet thoroughly applied. We believe that an immense amount of hard study remains to be done, all over Christendom, before the critical method will have developed anything like its full results. Subjecting the Bible also to the common canons of historical evidence, we find ourselves unconvinced of some things related in it, which the "original Unitarians" accept as fact. Thus, with regard to the extraordinary events related in the Gospels, known as miracles, while we believe most of the accounts of them to have some historical basis, while we believe most of the cases of healing to have taken place, yet with regard to some of the most remarkable miracles, including the resurrection, we do not find the historical evidence overwhelming enough to offset the extraordinary character of the occurrences, and the likelihood of illusion, whose presence a comparison with analogous cases in religious history has taught us to suspect.

I have tried to indicate in what way the "new school" varies from that of the "original Unitarians." I have tried to state our negative side. To our credit be it said, we usually preserve a discreet silence upon this negative side. We think it neither necessary nor proper, on ordinary occasions, to trouble the public with telling them what we do not believe. But have we any positive side? Are we Christians by any fair showing? Upon this

point, we have that inward monitor upon our side against which the thunders of excommunication can only peal in vain. We are Christians, and we profess ourselves such, because we believe in Christ; because we regard him as the greatest person whom God has given us power to know; because we regard his thought as the apprehension of divine realities beyond the original scope of any other human intellect, his life as the most perfect obedience to divine truth known in human history. We believe in Christ as the one person whose nature includes within itself the natures of all other men, and stretches far beyond them all, beyond the reach of our thought. We believe in him as the one man whose greatness no one has yet fully fathomed, whose nature we can only hope to know in part. We humbly profess ourselves his disciples and his followers, looking to him for teaching, and for guidance and help.

But are we Unitarians? Have we any right to be in the Unitarian body? We agree that to belong by right to any body, we need to be in harmony, to some extent, at any rate, with its general faith and principles; that fellowship is only possible among those animated by kindred principles and purposes; that fellowship will be perfect in proportion as the unity of the faith is perfect. The practical question then is, are we in sufficient harmony with Unitarianism to belong to it, or, considering ourselves in it, to stay in it? Or is there such

a radical difference between us as to make withdrawal our only honest course? By our action we have answered these questions. Are we right in our answer? I think we are. In the first place, the notion that any body of doctrine can endure in identical unity through two generations is an illusion. No two individuals are identical, much less two generations. It is a simple certainty that the faith of one generation will vary from that of its predecessor; but must each generation split off from its predecessor, and set up a new sect? Heaven forefend! We love our mother Church. We are grateful for her teachings. We cannot wholly agree with her, but shall we, on that account, break with her?

No; we love the Church in which we were born; we are bound to it "by natural piety." We feel that we not only have a right to stay in it, but that we are bound to stay in it, unless a radical difference of faith should inwardly alienate us, or outward pressure should exile us from it. This is the sentimental side for those of us who are Unitarians by birthright. It is an honest sentiment whose guidance we should not hesitate, in case of doubt, to follow. But our position is very defensible in reason. We hold that there is a substantial unity of the faith between us and the Unitarian fathers, that the difference in our faith is no more than that just and natural variance to be expected from our different conditions. Like the Unitarian fa-

thers, we believe in the absolute unity of God, in the headship of Jesus Christ, in the supreme value of the Bible as containing the Gospel of Christ, and as showing us its historical preparation and its first fruits. We believe, like them, in the outward Church as an institution for continuing and unfolding to their universal ends the thought and life of Christ. And we believe, like them, in religious liberty, in leaning ever toward the largest possible religious fellowship, letting any one join us who wants to join us; nay, going into the highways and byways, and compelling them to come in, even at the risk of getting into strange company. We stand, as our fathers did, upon the outskirts of the Christian Church in loose array, each seemingly for himself, with little apparent order or leadership, yet at our posts, an essential part of the great army. We hear the voices of the early leaders commanding us to hold fast to the liberties of our Church; to guard its freedom with jealous watchfulness, not to bind the word of God, or the Gospel of Christ; to turn no man away who may wish to join us, or may hope to be helped by us; to have faith in the honesty of our fellowmen, and to believe that they come to us not as traitors but as friends; to receive them liberally, be they never so strange to us. We listen to these high commands, and our hearts beat back responsive. Yes, we will keep our posts. The order, the security, the close array, the gathered numbers, these might

be ours, if to gain them we would barter our traditional principles, and desert our posts. We will do neither. We will keep our posts if they be only outposts, or even single pickets.

Thus we hold ourselves to be Unitarian Christians, and are determined not to leave our Church, unless forced out. If the issue upon these matters in which we vary from the faith of the fathers be forced, it is evident, since a line of cleavage exists, that a split may be made; that is, if the "original Unitarian" party push this issue hard enough, they will split either the "new school" off, or themselves off, whichever happens to be the larger body. I think that, though self-elected, I represent a united constituency in saying that any such disunion would cause us unselfish and deep pain. Doubtless our more conservative brethren would feel the same, although it may be that they will feel convinced of the necessity of forcing the issue. I have tried to add something to the evidence needed for a just judgment of the matter, in stating as well as I could the position of one large party in the Unitarian Church, as at present constituted, the party which comes next in order to the "original Unitarian" or Channing party, which with regard to the "original Unitarians" is radical; with regard to those accounted specially the radicals of the body is conservative.

FAITH IN CHRIST.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." — JOHN XIV., 12.

The form of Jesus passed from the earth, but the truth and love and grace which were in him, and which had dwelt for a season among men, did not pass from the earth with his mortal frame. They lived on in the spirits of those who believed on him. Through the faith of these believers the narrow boundary which shut in Christ's immediate action widened out over distant lands; through this faith the work of Christ extended beyond the limits of his mortal life, increasing with the increase of years; through it Jesus Christ still acts upon the world, and he who, eighteen hundred years ago, went about Galilee and Judea doing good, now, through the faith of millions of believers, goes about the whole world doing good; is, under God, chief among the spiritual leaders of mankind.

What is this faith in Christ through which this work has been done? What is faith? It seems sometimes as though we missed understanding religious things by trying too hard to understand them, by straining our minds in our effort to discover them, by seeking them as far as possible outside of our common knowledge and experience. It seems wiser to begin our inquiry by looking into near and familiar places, and seeing if we may not there discover some trace of what we seek. When we believe in any one, what is it that makes up our faith in him? May we not say simply, and in general, that faith in any one is the judgment of our minds that he is worthy to be trusted, joined with the leaning of our hearts to trust him? This complex process of thought and feeling may be gone through with unconsciously; but we become conscious of it, at any rate, when we are losing faith in one whom we had trusted, when our hearts which will have it so, strive with our minds which declare that it is not so; and we may have had the brighter experience of gaining faith in a friend, by gradually perceiving in one whom we had loved, but whose excellence we had mistrusted, virtues at first unrecognized. Faith in any person, then, we may call in general a leaning, attachment, or allegiance of our minds and hearts to that person. If our minds are disaffected, if we are suspicious of a person's claims upon us, our faith cannot but be weak at best, nor if our hearts hold back can our

faith be strong. But when both mind and heart consent, when our judgment and affection both agree, when the one says it is so, and the other responds to it, then we have faith.

If we consider those whom we believe in, we shall find that our faith in different persons varies with their character. One man we believe to be honest, and him we trust for his honesty. Another man we believe to be wise, to be able to see the truth regardless of persons or circumstances, and him we trust for his wisdom; and so we might go on, and for every one of our acquaintance we should find we had a different faith, varying with the character of the persons. And again, if we should take a man's friends, if we should take a number of persons who all agreed in believing in one man, and should learn precisely what kind of faith each one had in him, we should find that no two men believed in him in precisely the same way; that while all believed in him, yet the nature of that faith, while in all it might have certain general features of likeness, while in many it might be almost identical, varied, nevertheless, in each one according to his own peculiar character and attainments, according to the justness of his judgment, the warmth of his heart, his knowledge of the man, and his sympathy with him. The simpler the character of the person who was the object of their faith, the greater would be the likeness in his friends' faith in him; the more complete and the

higher his character, the greater would be the diversity in his friends' faith in him.

Take, for instance, our faith in two very different men, Napoleon Bonaparte and Shakespeare. Our faith in these men varies with their character. We believe in Napoleon as a soldier, as a wonderful commander, — one of those rare natures in whom is coiled up a mysterious power over men, at whose word a mixed multitude, a confused mass of men, collects itself, takes shape and form, organizes itself into one body, and moves irresistible and overwhelming, yet obedient to the controlling will of its superior. We believe in Napoleon as one of the world's great captains, fit to rank with resistless Alexander and imperial Cæsar, and with his own great antagonist and conqueror. But we believe in Shakespeare as a poet, as a man of marvelous creative imagination, of wonderful insight into the things of nature and into the heart of man, of universal sympathy with nature and man; we believe in him as the crowning glory of our English tongue. Thus we believe in both, but our faith in them varies with their character. And, again, take the faith of different persons in Shakespeare. Take a number of persons who all believe in him, and question them as to the nature of their faith in him. Some would know little of him except his name, and would believe in him through faith in the general judgment of mankind. Others would be familiar with the common quotations from him;

their faith would be mostly held upon trust in the public judgment, but would be a little enlightened by personal knowledge. Others, again, would have read some of his plays, or seen them acted, and felt their power. And others would have read him, and understood him, and loved him. It is plain that the faith of these persons varies with each one's character and attainments; that the one who believes in Shakespeare after reading him has a different faith in him, and a faith more firmly based, than the one who only believes in him from hearsay; that he who understands him and sympathizes with him has a better faith in him than he who does not understand or sympathize with him.

Our faith in any person, then, is conditioned both by that person's character and nature, and by our own character and nature. Faith in any one, to be firm, must be based upon some excellence in him; and, supposing that excellence to exist, our faith in it will be perfect, according as our knowledge and understanding of it, and our sympathy with it, are perfect.

Faith in Christ is subject to these same conditions. It presupposes the existence and the excellence of Christ's person, and it demands of us knowledge of him, understanding of his thought and life, and sympathy with him, or love and reverence for him. If Christ's thought and life be false and wrong, then is our Christian faith baseless; then the sooner it passes away the better; then we

may be sure it will pass away. The only sure foundation of our Christian faith must ever be the reality and the truth of Christ's personality, of his thought or teaching, of his life or example. That is the central point of Christianity. If we believe in Christ, if our minds and hearts acknowledge him as our spiritual leader, acknowledge his thought as true, his life as transcendently good, then we are by right Christians, let whosoever may deny it.

Faith in Christ, then, has for its object a fixed and unalterable fact, — Christ himself. No device of man's, no cunning of priestcraft, no pious fraud, no revolutionary passion, no human short-sightedness or malice, can in the slightest degree alter that fact. And yet if we were to ask our Christian neighbors what they mean by faith in Christ, we should get a great variety of answers. And if we could get beneath their formal answers, and read what is written in their consciences, get at the real nature of their Christian faith, we should find another diversity. While we might find more substantial agreement than we had looked for, while we might find large numbers of persons whose faith agreed in complexion and general features, we should yet find each individual to have an individual faith varying from all the rest, even as one man's face varies from all other men's. The cause of this diversity in the faith of Christians is not far to seek; for Christian faith not only requires an object of belief, but demands knowledge and

sympathy, or allegiance, in the believer, so that for a number of believers to have an identical faith would require not only that the object of that faith should be one and the same object, but that the nature and state of all the believers should be identical. Such entire unity of Christian faith is impossible, even if it were desirable. We have not all the same powers, nor the same opportunities, nor are all equally faithful. We are, however, all alike in one sad particular, — that we are all imperfect; that the wisest and best of us only knows in part, and only obeys in part, and therefore the faith of all of us is imperfect. If our knowledge and understanding of Christ, of his thought and life, were co-extensive with that thought and life, if our obedience were co-extensive with our knowledge, then, but not till then, would our Christian faith be perfect; and that faith is comparatively perfect in proportion as we know and comprehend Christ's teaching and example, and in proportion as this knowledge becomes conviction, and bears fruit in our lives. There is some lamentation over the decline of Christian faith at the present time, and though it is very doubtful if there be such a decline, it is certainly true that there is now, and always has been, a lamentable lack of this faith in the world, and that every effort should be made to renew and increase it in ourselves and others. How may we renew and increase faith in Christ? There may be other useful ways, but the simplest,

and perhaps the most effectual, and certainly the hardest method, is to renew the elements of this faith in ourselves, — that is, the fact of Christ's personality, of his thought and life, remaining fixed; if that thought and life be true, as we believe, then we must renew and increase our knowledge and understanding of it, and our loyalty to it, so that his thought shall become more perfectly teaching to us, his life become more perfectly an example to us. We must strive to perfect our faith.

And how shall we know that our faith is the true faith? What authority can we have that we may not be mistaken? We can have no infallible authority; we may be mistaken. We can have no infallible authority, and yet we may have some authority. We may have the authority of our consciences enlightened by the experience of mankind, and by the teaching and the lives of the wise and good who have lived before us, and are living now. We may have the authority of our consciences acting under direct and full responsibility to God their Maker, and under the sanctions of his law; and in proportion as our consciences are enlightened and pure and single and devout, open to God's truth, will our authority be strong. Three hundred and fifty years ago, Martin Luther was summoned to the bar of the Roman Church to answer for the doctrines he had published. He came to Worms and appeared before the Diet. Called upon to recant what he had written, he made his defense, and,

under peril of his life and liberty, stood up against the power of the Roman Church. And when, at the close of his defense, he said, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen,"— we feel that he spoke with authority, with the authority of a devout conscience, obedient to its vision of the truth. And such must be our authority. We stand under the awful sanctions of God's eternal law. We know that error and sin, that all wrong of thought or act, must be atoned for by our or by others' suffering. We know that in truth and goodness only does our real life consist. We know that we are responsible to God for the minds which he has given us, for the truth which he has given us power to apprehend; that we are responsible to God for our hearts and spirits, for the life which he has given us power to live. Under this responsibility we stand, under the responsibility to perfect our faith.

"He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also;" that is the sweet fruit of true faith in Jesus Christ, that through it we grow like him. It is the same with faith in any one. If we know and love a friend, and believe in him, we find ourselves, insensibly it may be, yet surely, growing like him, moulded, as the poet says, "by silent sympathy." In proportion as he is worthy of our faith, and as our faith in him is perfect, does he act upon our hearts, and affect and influence our lives; and so it is with Christ, our friend, our eldest brother, "first-born among many brethren."

It is one of the bright signs of the times that Christendom is searching so diligently into the life of Jesus. With the deeper and better knowledge of him, which will be the final result of these inquiries, we may safely predict a great revival of Christian faith, a great renewing of Christian life. There are some who fear this searching and prying into the old records, who are afraid that criticism will leave nothing to criticise, that a scientific inquest into the foundations of our faith will result in a report that no such foundations exist. I trust that none of us have such weak faith as that; that we all believe that the more we seek, the more we shall find, the more we shall know; that the better we know Jesus, the more we shall love him, the more faith we shall have in him, the more we shall grow like him. The fruit of a true faith in Jesus Christ is that through it we grow like him, like him in mind and heart and conscience, like him in life and spirit. Like him, we grow into a faith in our Heavenly Father, into a trust in God's infinite wisdom and love. From him we learn to look on every man as our brother, and on mankind as one great household, whose head is God. From him we apprehend the reality of an eternal world of justice and of love, the reality of a life unlimited by our frail mortality. From him we learn the infinite perfectibility of our spirits, the power given us by God to grow into a likeness to himself; the infinite perfectibility of mankind, the possibility and the

hope of a united humanity, of a universal church, of a kingdom of God upon the earth. From him we learn to overcome error with truth, despair with faith, sin with love; and from his faith and love, from his great heart and spirit, we draw refreshment and new strength.

The fruit of true faith in Christ is to make him who has it become Christian, and we have here a searching test of the quality and genuineness of our Christian faith. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." We can afford to smile at the tests sometimes applied to decide who has faith in Christ and who has not, who is a Christian and who is not; but that terrible test of doing the will of our Heavenly Father goes to the heart of the matter. Living a Christian life, doing the works of Christ, following him in his filial obedience to his Father's will, — that is the crucial test, as it is the blessed fruit, of Christian faith. In proportion as that faith is pure and strong within us are we prepared to enter the kingdom of heaven which may come on earth, if only we be fit to enter into it.

And this applies not only to the faith of the individual Christian, but to the collective faith of a church. A church, too, must be judged by its fruits. When a church guards faithfully the precious traditions of the past; when it fosters Christian truth and life; when its members by their

union support each other, and help each other to be more Christian men and women; when its services keep alive and increase holy hopes, affections, and aspirations; when its worship is at once the expression and the nourishment of Christian faith; when those who come to it go not away empty, but take home with them some increase of Christian truth, some increase of Christian life; when the poor and the ignorant may look to it with hope; when, in a word, it is continuing the work of Christ, and helping all connected with it to live Christian lives; when its collective action is in the cause of truth and honesty, of love and humanity, and piety,—then we may feel sure that that church has faith in Christ, is a true Christian church.

No shrewd devices, no politic schemes, no ingenious ecclesiastical machinery, can take the place of this faith. Without it, a church is but a semblance, however politic its organization, however great its number, however imposing its outward show. With this faith, though only two or three be gathered together for common worship and for mutual help, there is a true church; for it is this faith which is the soul of the church, the original and vital source from whence all the churches of Christendom have sprung, and which sustains them still in health and vigor.

IMMORTALITY.

"In hope of eternal life." — TITUS i., 2.

Our daily lives are chiefly taken up with our daily necessities, occupations, and pleasures. The struggle for existence, the care of our bodies and of other people's bodies, the necessity of sleep and restful recreation, attention to the immediate interests of ourselves and our neighbors, — these and kindred occupations take up the bulk of our time. That we may bring to all this work a spirit which makes it more than drudgery, is true; that we may take a large and elevating view of our daily work, and by putting it in its place, and seeing and feeling its relations with the great movements of human activity, may give even to our little work a certain grandeur and nobility; that we may by the purity and height of our motives put something divine into our commonest action, is true; and yet with all these compensations, we all know that our daily necessities lie heavy on us. And most of us are so overcome with the cares

and pressing duties of our lives, that we are seldom in tune for thought and meditation upon the higher mysteries. "One world at a time" is often our thought; but the saying is more witty than deep, for a looking forward into the future world is a part of this world, — the fullest present life includes the past and the future. And

> "If our life be life,
> And thought, and will, and love,
> Not vague, unconscious airs
> That o'er wild harp-strings move;
> If consciousness be aught
> Of all it seems to be,
> And souls be something more
> Than lights which gleam and flee,
> Though dark the road which leads us thither,
> The soul must ask its whence and whither."

However overcome we may be by our cares, there is in all of us, and especially in all those who have had experience of sorrow, this questioning and forelooking spirit. And there come times in the lives of all of us when the thought of the future becomes the absorbing thought. In those hours when God afflicts us deepest, he sometimes sends down to our side to comfort us his bright angels of hope and faith; and, listening to their whisperings, we cry out in the midst of our affliction at our loss, "O God, this is not the end."

And indeed in all the great crises of our lives, whether of sorrow or of joy, when our hearts are deepest stirred, weighed down, or lifted up, there is

within us a certain bursting of our common limitations, a reaching out of our natures towards something larger than our experience, — towards immortality.

And though the thought of immortality may not seem capable of demonstration — it is the simplest things that are easiest proved, — though it may belong to those upper mysteries which are beyond our sight and knowledge, and only to be apprehended by hope and faith, which alone give us glimpses into things unseen, yet our experience is not wholly wanting in a kind of inward evidence, — in indications which direct, and strengthen, and fix our hope, so that it becomes a firm and constant faith.

But let us say it boldly that the hope of immortality in itself and by itself is a blessed hope. Though there were no evidence at all to support it, though it dwelt apart and unattended in our hearts, though it were a bare hope, no more than a bright suspicion in our minds that this might be so, it were a blessed hope. Let us say it boldly, the hope of immortality is "its own excuse for being." If I have it, if the hope is possible to me, that is enough to justify it. I would not be ashamed of that hope; rather I would still rejoice in it, though objections without number should be brought against it, though the burden of probabilities and proof should seem to be against it. We can always say with truth, if we are out-argued by any

one in this matter, I surrender my argument, but not my hope. That neither you nor any one can disprove, for even allowing its positive proof to be beyond our power, so, at any rate, is its disproof. Where can you, or any one, get such a knowledge of the future as to say with authority, "This hope is false"? You cannot do it. The hope of immortality, in itself considered, stands secure, exists by its own divine right. As an inward, spiritual fact, as a blessed, personal experience, as our consolation and our strength, it needs no other title to existence than its own blessed nature.

When, therefore, I consider the rational grounds for this hope, I do it not so much as an apology for the hope itself — it needs no such apology, — but rather to make this heavenly hope a familiar guest in our hearts, to prepare our minds so that it may lodge in them and be at home in them, and we be at home with it.

If the thought of immortality were the thought only of an occasional thinker, we might class it among the fancies or whims of the human imagination; but that is not the case. It is a universal thought. Like the thought of God, we find the thought of immortality everywhere among men. It s not absolutely universal perhaps. There are, doubtless, single men to be found who have never had a thought of God or immortality, just as there are men who have no ear at all for music. There may be, perhaps, some tribes of savages so low as

to be wholly without thought of God or a future life. But, allowing for these exceptions, the thought of a future life is a universal thought in some form or other, in every age, and in every land, so that, like the thought of God, it seems to be a part of human nature itself. The human conscience seems by its very nature and constitution to be turned in that direction; seems to look forward into the future from a kind of inward necessity, and to fix its gaze upon the future as though there were something there for it to apprehend, as though there were a reality there, toward which the conscience could not but turn. This consciousness of being related with the future is a universal fact of human nature, found alike among the civilized and the barbarous, expressing itself under the greatest diversity of symbols and forms, but found everywhere.

And this thought of a future life is not only found among all men, but it is found increasingly as men develop in mind and conscience and heart. It is more universal, more developed, more disputed, more accepted, more a part of the public thought and speculation and belief, in proportion as men grow intellectually and spiritually. We find the thought in its simple beginnings among savage tribes and primitive nations, the children of history, and in the minds of children now,—the happy hunting-ground of the Indians, the Elysian fields of the old Greeks, the heaven which the

child pictures to himself. Then, as the human spirit develops, the conscience awakens; *it* adds to the conception; and, as the mind grows, *it* fills out and enlarges the conception; and, as the heart deepens its affections to a love which knows no mortal term, *it* casts out its anchor to lay hold of the eternal foundation. Thus is this thought, this consciousness, this hope of a future life, not only a universal fact of our nature, but is an organic part of our nature,—it grows with our growth. It grows larger and deeper and purer in proportion as our natures enlarge and deepen and grow clear. It keeps pace with the other developments of the human spirit. It is a constant factor in the thought, the philosophy, the faith of all nations. There are, to be sure, great ebbs and floods in the thought and faith of civilized nations. We cannot say of anything that it develops by a steady process in the mind of humanity; faith ebbs and flows, yet there is a progress in it, and there are certain great objects of faith which are never lost sight of, to which even in the most sceptical ages men pay at least the homage of denial. The future life is one of the constant objects of hope and thought and faith. Wipe out all thought of that from the world's history, and what a blank you would make. Now all this does not demonstrate the truth of immortality as one can demonstrate a matter of mathematics, and yet this general apprehension of mankind of a life to come, the universality of this

apprehension, and the organic connection which it has with all our higher life, — all this points the way to immortality. We cannot believe that this universal sense, that there is something for us in the future, is a delusion. We cannot but believe that there is a reality which corresponds to this general apprehension and consciousness that we are related to the future. The constant recurrence of this thought and faith, the universal reiteration of it by men of every age and of every land, its organic relation with the human spirit, its peculiar prominence in the faith of the holiest men, this is a cumulative evidence, that we have to do not with a fancy, but with a truth, deep-based and broad-based in human experience and in the human conscience, having for its object a reality, veiled indeed from our mortal eyes by clouds of mystery, only to be dimly apprehended by us, yet a reality.

Then, too, there is that evidence which comes to us from our inward experience of the effect of this faith upon our souls. Robertson, speaking of the problem of free-will and necessity, says something like this: "I confess myself unable to solve this problem speculatively. I cannot understand how I can be a free agent, and yet all my acts be in accordance with God's eternal providence; and yet, though speculatively I cannot harmonize these things, I hold the faith that I am a free agent to be true, because when I think otherwise, and feel that I am but a passive instrument in the hands of

a higher power, my will dies out within me, my moral energy grows weak, and my whole spirit sick, while the faith that I am a free agent, that I am morally responsible, that I am a person, strengthens me, braces my soul, and quickens into life all my inward energies." I suppose we have all of us had experiences something like that. And our experience teaches us the same lesson with regard to faith in immortality. That, too, like the faith that we are persons, free, responsible, not pieces of mechanism, — that, too, has a wholesome and strengthening effect upon our souls. The belief that this earthly life of ours is the sum and end-all of our destiny, is not large enough to fit our inward needs, does not harmonize with the scope and character of our highest thoughts, affections, aspirations, and duties. There is a closeness in the atmosphere of this thought which stifles aspiration and affection and devotion, which confines the conscience, and stunts spiritual growth. The belief that we are mere machines of flesh, eating, drinking, marrying, and dying, and there the end, is not a wholesome belief for our souls. The experience of men and nations — our own experience, let us say, for I imagine we have all had it, or something like it — teaches us that this belief that we are nothing but things of flesh, sickens our consciences, makes all our higher energies grow weak, takes out of us the spirit of heroism and devotion and self-sacrifice, narrows

the scope of our thoughts and aspirations, and dwarfs our actions, knocks away the foundation of our religion and morality, and makes everything except our present interests and the palpable necessities of ourselves and others a hollow unreality. But the thought of the eternal life, the hope and faith that our mortal flesh is not the whole of us; that our higher life, our thought, our love, our faith, our aspiration, our consciousness of personal existence, and the belief that our fellow-men are persons; the thought that our higher life is a reality, that there is a truth corresponding to our hope and faith; the thought of the eternal life, of the infinite possibilities of our nature, of the infinite consequences of our lives and actions, — how that braces our spirits, how it expands our thoughts, how it quickens our consciences, how it urges us to the highest life and action. We are no longer cribbed and confined within the close walls of our mortality; we stand in the free air, with the boundless heavens above us, and are cheered by the warmth of God's infinite love.

We eat bread because we hunger for it, and we justify ourselves in eating it because it does us good, and sustains and strengthens us. And so we believe in the eternal life because there is that within us which lays hold of the eternal life, and we justify our faith in it because it sustains and strengthens our souls, because it is good for us, good for the best part of us, because it helps us to

be better men ourselves, because it helps us to love our neighbors more truly and more deeply, and to love God, and to believe in him more.

We hold it self-evident that we are meant to be all that we can be, and that, therefore, the faith which enables us to be more than we can be without it, must have truth in it. From the nature of the fruit we judge the root to be sound, and to draw its sustenance from the soil of truth.

And although our common experience seems to us too narrow and limited to harmonize with the infinite thought of immortality, yet there are not wanting in our lives experiences which for the moment seem to expand our spirits and our thoughts beyond mortal limits. We come back again to our narrow limits very soon, perhaps, but for the moment we had left them; we become conscious of possibilities within our nature seldom and only partially fulfilled in our experience.

The beauty and sublimity of nature — God's thoughts expressed in the mountain, the plain, the river, the sea, the boundless sky, the stars, in the flowers, and in the world of living creatures, the immensity, the order, the beauty, the power, and glory of nature — touch some inner sense in our spirits, which our daily experience only partially satisfies, suggest to us capabilities, not yet developed, of perception and life. The stars may be millions of miles away, but we have some part in them; the immensity of space passes our imagina-

tion and our thought, yet we feel ourselves not wholly strangers to its infinitude. When we have looked on some new wonder of nature, we feel that this scene has called out something from within us not known to us before; that our nature itself has become richer through this experience, and hence we suspect the possibility of an infinite enlargement of our natures.

And still more vividly, perhaps, are we affected in this way by the highest manifestation of human genius, the glory of God manifested in the power of men. There is some music which has in it this heavenly quality, that it stirs something infinite within us, giving us prophetic hints of possibilities within our nature which we had not before dreamed of. One of our modern poets well describes this power of the highest music, when he says that those who heard it, "conceived their immortality." And there are poems and pictures which speak to something mysterious within us, to some part of our personality which we know to be our deepest, and highest, and best self, our heart of hearts, which we know to be a part of ourselves, and yet which we hardly recognize as ourselves. This interior self, thus at times revealed to us, is a prophecy of future possibilities. I have never seen the picture, but they say that the picture of the Sistine Madonna at Dresden speaks in this way to everybody's heart; that all who come to look at it, careless sight-seers, people lacking in taste and

culture and refinement, rude and coarse, it may be, that they all grow silent before that picture, that there is in it a mysterious beauty and power which touches something hidden in every heart. It is the same with the highest poetry, with the highest prose, with all large and high and noble thought and life, whether it be expressed in word, in art, or in action. The response which these things awaken in our spirits hints to us possibilities of power and of growth beyond anything known to our experience. That our fellow-men should be capable of such exalted life expands our conception of the human personality; that the commonest men can share to some extent in their thought and life indicates that we may all be capable of endless growth and life.

And we feel, too, this same sense of a possible expansion of our natures to an almost infinite extent in the domain of knowledge. The more we know, the more we desire to know; and the more we perceive, how boundless is the field of knowledge, the more our minds grow, the more we perceive how much further they are capable of growing. There is something prophetic in the conquests of the human mind,—the far-reaching thoughts of great philosophers have brought the stars within the compass of our minds, and the earth, and the elements. In these conquests of the human mind ever space and time we all partake. In the onlarging of our range of vision, and of knowl-

edge, there is a prophecy of intellectual possibilities in our personality not yet realized.

It is the same with all the higher parts of our nature,—all those parts which are capable of growth and expansion, and all those parts which reach beyond our individual life and immediate interests. Above all, it is in our unselfish love for others and in our moral and religious life that we find the deepest and strongest evidence of an immortal principle within us. Out of pure love for another, to sacrifice our own dear wishes,—there is something suggestive and prophetic in that. If our nature is capable of that (and we know that it is capable of it), if we can put ourselves into another's place, and out of love for him suffer for him, who shall set limits to the possibilities of the human heart? And when against the shrinkings of our flesh and imagination, at the call of duty we obey God and sacrifice our ease or safety, we become partakers in his infinite and eternal nature. In loving God's truth, in obeying it, we become partakers of that eternal truth. In loving God, our Father, we become partakers of his infinite nature. By faith, by prayer, by communion, by worship, by consecration, by doing our duty for his sake, by love of him and obedience to his will we lay hold of God, we become partakers of his eternal life. "This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." To know Jesus Christ, the holiest and most heavenly

man whom God has sent into the world, to become acquainted with him, to learn of him and receive into ourselves the thought and spirit, the truth and grace and love which God gave him, and thus to rise to the knowledge and the love of God, that is eternal life, and in proportion as that holy spirit which was in Christ, and which is the highest revelation of God's spirit granted to us, in proportion as we receive into ourselves that Holy Spirit are we partakers in the eternal life.

And the teachings of our inward experiences in this matter are enlarged and confirmed by the examples of others. If our memories served us faithfully, I imagine we could all of us remember experiences, great or small, vivid or only slightly felt, resembling those I have just spoken of; but in the lives of philosophers and heroes and saints, we see the same lessons repeated, drawn out in larger and brighter characters. The thinkers or the poets who included nature and man within their thoughts and sympathies, were their minds, their genius, their wonderful personalities made only to last a few short years? And are there not achievements still in store for them? We cannot but believe it. And those heroes who for the love of their fellow-men, for the love of their country, or for those entrusted to their charge, gave up their own lives; those brave-hearted men whose story sweetens the history of every nation and of every neighborhood, — can we believe that it is to their

loss that they obeyed the larger, the unselfish love, and sacrificed themselves? Not if we believe in God as an all-wise, all-loving Father. With that belief our faith in immortality is bound up. That the largest and highest aspirations, the purest affections, the holiest consecration and self-sacrifice should end in suffering, we cannot harmonize with our conception of God as our Father. We cannot think it in accordance with God's love that the noblest and holiest souls should through their holiest act, through the most God-like action of which man is capable — self-sacrifice for love of God and man, — should by this holiest act meet only death. If there be a God, and if Christ's thought be true, and that God be our Father, then they who die for his sake, and for their brethren's sake, cannot die; they pass into that larger, higher life of which their souls are capable and worthy.

And thus it is that Jesus Christ, whose mind and heart reached out to every human being, and who, of all men most truly walked with God, thus it is that Jesus Christ, of all who have ever lived upon the earth the holiest martyr, is our strongest evidence of the eternal life. That such a person should through his holiest act, the sacrifice of his life for the love of God and man, meet only death, we cannot think. That Jesus lives, we cannot but believe, and that we and all men have eternal life in store for us, we devoutly hope. By what mysterious means we may be purged of our sins,

what sufferings may be in store for our sins, who can tell? How the desperately perverse and sinful are to be redeemed we may not understand; yet we hold the hope in all its breadth "that sin can make no wound beyond love's power to heal"; "that it is not the will of our Father, our Almighty Father, that one of these little ones should perish."

This blessed hope of immortality, this consoling faith in the eternal life, the good Father has given to us for our strength and comfort. To bear us up under disappointment and trial, to help us meet the dreadful shock of death, he has given us this glimpse into the eternal world. The holiest and the saintliest of men, those who have risen nearest to God, and, most of all, our Saviour, have had this faith in largest measure. We lesser and more earthly spirits hold to this hope and faith, doubting at times, and sometimes, it may be, almost staggered; but the witness of our deepest experience harmonizes with the faith of the saints. "Our trust is truer than our fears." That our spirits are capable of harboring this hope is itself an indication of something more than mortal in us. The hope itself in its simplicity unshielded, we need feel no shame to hold, — rather thank God that we are permitted to hold it. When the waters grow dark around us, and the skies grow dark above us, let us cast out this anchor into the obscure future, trusting in God that it will strike the eternal foundation of his truth, and will hold.

COMMUNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD.

Religion is the relation of the human soul with God. All religion proceeds from the consciousness in the soul of a power not itself with which it is related. All the different religions are so many several embodiments of this religious consciousness of men. According as this inner consciousness varies, so does its outward embodiment and expression vary. The vast variety of religious faiths and practices testify to the countless variations of this religious consciousness in different men; on the other hand, certain broad features of likeness, and a certain logic and method inside all the variations, testify to a kind of unity of all religions, and to an inward relationship between them all. The variations arise from the various races and individuals, out of whose religious consciousness the different religions have sprung; the unity and relationship inside all the variations spring from the common humanity, the common human nature, of all races and all individuals. We may

take a comparison from the human face. No one's face is exactly like another's; every individual varies from every other; yet amid this variety, we see a marked unity of feature in the likeness of families, of neighborhoods, of nations, of races, and a wider unity in the universal likeness of the human race. Not one individual but varies from all the rest; not one but is like all the rest, and related with all; on the one hand, a universal variety, and on the other, a universal unity, and relationship. So it is with all things human, including religion. In calling religion human, I do not mean to say that it is not divine, but merely to state the evident truism that man's religion is at any rate human, whatever else it may be.

The comparative history of religions teaches us that the religious consciousness has varied through the whole range of human nature. It has allied itself at different times with every part of our nature from the lowest to the highest,—the senses, the passions, the imagination, the thought, the will. It has occupied every corner of the human heart. It has been a terror, a doubt, a despair, an intoxication, a madness; a hope, a faith, a joy, an aspiration, a consecration, a divine communion. It may be that there have been men of such large experience as to have gone through in their own hearts almost this whole range of religious consciousness; who have been well-nigh brutes, to begin with; who have waked first to a faint consciousness of

self, and of a being other than self; who have felt the terror of this other being, in sickness, storm, or danger, and his bounty in the sunshine, and in the fruits of the earth; who have wakened further to the consciousness of harmony and beauty; of right, and wrong, and of duty; of will, and love; to the hope of the immortal life; to the faith in the reality of God and of his Fatherhood; and to a consecration of self to him, and a community of life with him, in the fellowship of his Holy Spirit. Such men may have been, whose personal experience has thus stretched from the brute animal up to God himself, whose personal experience, if only it were spread out fully before us, would show in outline all the main features of religious consciousness which we see drawn out in larger characters in the different religions of mankind. And taking our own experience even, including that of our childhood, we find a hint of it all there. The grisly idols of which we see the pictures, what are they but the full development in imagination and outward form of the terrors, and shudderings, and bad dreams which we have all had? What are sacrifices but the development into systematic custom and solemn act of our awe before the power above us, or our gratitude for the gifts of his bounty? All the religions of the world are related with our nature and experience. And as the lowest cannibal savage, and the holiest Christian saint, along with the great sweep of difference between

them, have yet a community and likeness of nature, in that they are both men, so has the most abominable religion that has ever been upon the earth a relationship with the holiest possible to man, since both grow, humanly speaking, out of the consciousness of God in the human soul. The various religions of the world are the various forms of relationship between the human soul and the being on whom the soul depends.

Some such relationship there must be. No one but a madman can think himself self-derived and self-dependent. If any man should think so, his death would soon prove to his neighbors, if not to himself, that he had made a mistake. In that sense certainly, no man can be an atheist; that is, no man can think himself self-derived, self-existent, self-dependent, and self-sufficing; but, on the contrary, he must believe himself to exist through some power or being not himself, on which he depends. Birth and death force this upon our consciousness. It is the consciousness, or thought, or faith which a man has of that power not himself from which he is derived which makes him a religious being.

This established, it is evident that the *character* of the relation between the human soul and the being on whom the soul depends will be conditioned by the character of the religious consciousness which, on the human side, is the bond of relationship. If my soul's consciousness of that being

be a mere vague and glimmering apprehension of a power greater than myself, it will manifest itself by a kind of trembling of the soul when some event — sickness, danger, or the sight of death — startles me into a recognition of my dependence and self-insufficiency. If fancy mingle in my religious consciousness, my relation with the being on whom I depend will be different. Then I may apprehend not one power controlling me, but many, the good and evil influences of nature. Then my commerce with the divine will be nature-worship, with all its manifold variety of service. Poetry, painting, sculpture, sacrifices, temples, will be demanded by this consciousness. Every form of nature will have its peculiar service and ritual. Hence the richness of polytheistic worship, as seen in its highest grace and beauty in ancient Greece, and in strange but impressive forms in India, Egypt, and other countries.

These instances of the more primitive, and what we may call instinctive, religious motives illustrate the fact that the character of the relation between man's soul and the power controlling him depends, on the human side, upon the character of this religious consciousness. We may see the diversity of relationship still further exemplified if we look at some religions which contain more reflection and speculation, which are more developed than the instinctive religions. Such religions are many of them called philosophies, but they are properly

religions, for the essential nature of religion lies in its being the relation between the human soul and the power controlling it. Hence all philosophies of the universe are a kind of religion. If then we regard the power on which we depend as chance, or force and matter, we are materialists. That power is not then a power above us, but below us. We must look down on it, even while we recognize that we are dependent on it. Our materialism gives the human side of our relation with the power controlling us; and that relation is evidently conditioned by the character of this consciousness. That is, if chance, or force and matter, be my God, then the relation of my soul with him, or it, will be conditioned by the nature of these objects. The nature of our communion with the Unseen will be conditioned by our conception of what the Unseen is. Our communion, or relation, with chance, or with force and matter, cannot be higher than these objects.

In some forms of pantheism, however, we approach a kind of communion with the divine. Thus one common form of pantheism is the conception of the being on whom we depend as the one unconscious All, unconscious nature, the universal being, living, but in itself unconscious, developing into partial consciousness in the animate creation, and in man; developing its life unceasingly, according to an inward method, yet unconsciously; the depth of being, circling upward, upward, upward,

till suddenly it wakes into conscious intelligence in man. Man looks around him for a few years, lives his life, and thinks his thoughts, and then down he goes, — his light is quenched in the eternal depths of unconscious nature. But though his reign is short, yet while it lasts, he, according to this pantheism, is lord and emperor of the universe. He is not indeed self-derived, or self-dependent, — far from it; but the being by which he exists, though it holds him in its hands, is yet beneath him; as long as it lets him think, he is as much superior to it as conscious intelligence is to unconsciousness. This will indicate the limits of pantheistic communion with the divine. It is not the communion of the spirit, the personal communion of thought, of love, of conscious united life, yet it is real after its kind. We have all of us experienced something like it, especially in times of weariness. We get a hint of it in that natural rest, that kind of conscious sleep, which our natures crave after struggle and labor; when to our tired spirits the striving of humanity, love, hate, hope, faith, and effort seem all a dream, when we go out into open nature, and refresh our souls with her repose, and with her life, and beauty, and fulness, and immensity. This is a true though partial consciousness. We are intimately related with material nature. The dust of the earth is what our bodies are made of and sustained by. I do not quarrel with the pantheistic consciousness, as far as it is a consciousness of relationship with

material nature. That is not its fault, but that it stops there is its fault, that it ignores the personal life, and puts an extinguisher upon personal thought, love, and will, in that it says not nature and God, but nature and no more. Hence the communion of the pantheistic consciousness can only be a communion with nature conceived as the unconscious All, not with the Father of our spirits.

We see another partial consciousness of God in the religion of solitary ascetics. In a cell or cave, or in the desert, the solitary soul alone with God; no sight or sound of nature to distract him, no human creature near him to excite any thought, or affection, or care; the soul alone with God, — such is the communion which springs from this kind of consciousness. But is not this the highest communion with God? No, for in excluding Nature and man from our communion, we exclude God himself, in so far as He is in nature and man. Solitary thought and prayer is an essential part of the religious life; the fault of the hermit and ascetic is that he makes this part the whole, and so fails of a full communion with the Father, for he is the Father not of our single souls only, but of all humanity, and of all creation; and if we would seek to know him fully, we must not alone commune with him in the depths of our own hearts, but must seek him also in others' hearts, and in the world which he has made.

These instances of some of the lower relations of the soul with the power controlling it, and of some of the partial forms of communion with Nature and God, illustrate some of the conditions of man's religious life, and lead us naturally to the consideration of the highest and fullest communion known to our experience or thought, — the communion of the personal human soul with the personal God. This communion springs from the consciousness in us of our oneness with nature, man, and God, and from our consciousness of God as the Original, Intelligent, Personal, Holy, and All-loving One, in his perfection transcendent above nature and man, yet including nature and man within himself, and in them immanent and shadowed forth, the Increate and Everlasting Father.

And now that we stand upon the threshold of this central mystery of religious thought, we become conscious of a failing of our strength, and a baffling of our vision; and it must be so. Do what we will, turn the matter over as we will, there must yet remain a mystery which we can only partially explore. The subject is in its very nature only partially within the reach of our experience and thought, and we can hardly do justice even to that which is within our reach. Though to our listening minds the harmonious notes are as firm and true as our other experience, yet they are most difficult to catch and fix. Our religious experience shares in the infinite and mysterious nature

of the objects with which it unites us. It is just our deepest life which is hardest fitly to express. I can only hope to draw certain lines which our own thoughts and memories must fill out, to set forth certain truths of our experience and thought which seem to me to involve the mysteries with which we have to do.

Communion of the soul with God, the prayer of man to God, the finite related with the Infinite, how is that possible? For the Infinite must include all existence; where, then, is there room for any finite? The existence of the finite would limit the Infinite, that is, limit the unlimited, which is an absurdity. If, then, the unlimited, the Infinite, exist, the finite (which would limit it) cannot exist, much less any relation between the finite and Infinite, such as prayer or communion. I confess that I am unable to answer this question on its own ground, nor do I think it can be answered, on the ground of formal, *a priori* logic. Its power is indeed artificially heightened to our imagination by its mathematical form. It grasps the universal all — God, man, nature, and eternity — in one universal, fixed, indivisible formula, the Infinite, which necessarily extinguishes everything particular and finite. But we are not dealing with a matter of space or time, of measurement or dimension, of mathematics or mechanics. We are dealing with real and personal existence, which is more mysterious than mathematics; and yet, after all, the perplexity involved

in this question remains. How can I have any existence in any way whatever distinct from God, the universal being? Here we find ourselves confronting the two mysteries of existence and free-will. *A priori* existence is inconceivable to me; *a posteriori* existence is a certainty to me. That is, when *a priori*, apart from my consciousness and experience, I try to think why anything should exist, why God should exist, or matter, or why I should exist, or how anything can exist, my thought is baffled,—existence is utterly inconceivable to me. But when, *a posteriori*, I regard my consciousness of my own existence, and my experience and observation of other existences not myself, I am, and cannot help being, certain of the reality of existence. The *why* of existence, then, is beyond our minds; the fact of existence is witnessed, beyond doubt, by our minds. My consciousness declares me to exist, and to exist as a finite being, limited to a certain place and time, and limited by other existences. This question, then, How can the finite exist, since its existence would limit the infinite? I cannot directly answer. I can only appeal to the undeniable testimony of consciousness, and say the finite *does* exist. The *why* is beyond us, but the fact remains; nor can a known and undeniable fact of consciousness be overthrown by our inability to give the reason for it. That inability marks one of the present limits of human thought. I will not say a final limit, for who is competent to say that? but a pres-

ent limit. It is the reverse of the scientific method to argue from the only partially apprehended infinite against the exact knowledge which our consciousness gives us of the finite. This perplexity, then, of the impossibility of prayer and communion with God, because it is impossible for us to exist as finite beings, I meet, as far as I am able to meet it, with the undeniable evidence of our consciousness that we do exist as finite beings. The second question, of free-will, comes more properly under another head, under which I will consider it.

Another perplexity about communion and prayer, near akin to what we have been considering, arises from the invariability of nature and of Providence. First, as to material nature. Is our prayer, our communion with God, in any way related with material nature? Can I, by faith in God and communion of spirit with him, affect the course of material nature? There is a very wide belief that prayer has nothing to do with material nature, nor can in any way affect the course of physical phenomena. I do not think it at all settled that this severing of our human nature, of our prayer and will, from material nature and phenomena, is true to the fact. What we call the laws of nature mean strictly our recognition of the general course of nature, based on our experience and observation; but our observation is necessarily partial, and in this matter it is by no means clear that it is uncontradicted. There can be no doubt that our souls

are very intimately related through our bodies with material nature; the question is, then, whether the human soul, strengthened by faith, and in communion with God, may not control material nature to a degree beyond all ordinary experience? "If ye have faith," says Jesus, "as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you." Mohammed, it is said, tried to move a mountain by faith, and, I imagine, was fully persuaded, when he ordered it to move, that it would move. Why, then, if he were fully convinced in his own mind, did not the mountain move, if Christ's thought be true? The question seems fair, if self-confidence be faith; if faith be a thing between one's self and one's self; but is that faith? In the story of the Temptation, Satan bids Jesus throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, quoting a good text of Scripture to his purpose; but Jesus says, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Which was faith? the confidence which Satan counselled, or the refusal of Jesus? Faith is not a thing between one's self and one's self, not self-confidence, but between one's self and God, God-confidence, if I may use the expression. It is at once the true vision of God's will and purpose, and the action of our hearts toward fulfilling it. Thus to remove a mountain by faith, we must not only be fully persuaded that we can move it, for that may be, and probably

would be, an illusion; but we must see, and see truly, that it is in God's will, and purpose, and to his glory, that it be removed, and then bend our whole souls to removing it. These conditions never have, and probably never will exist; so that these words of Jesus about removing a mountain are practically a figure, meaning that where the true vision of God's will, and the devout effort to obey it, that is, where real faith, exist, its effect can be limited only by its own inherent power. Is it possible, then, for any faith to be true, to be other than illusion, when it attempts to influence physical phenomena by direct prayer? I do not think that we have positive evidence of any experience that can prove this view; at the same time, I do not think our present state of science warrants us in affirming the contrary. There is a whole department of human experience — namely, the miraculous, the border-land between the material and super-material, or spiritual, world, about which we are very much in the dark — which warns us not to be too dogmatic in our affirmations about the laws of nature. On the other hand, is it not, as far as we can see, a part of God's will that physical phenomena should follow each other by an inward method impenetrable and uncontrollable by the human will, except through the exertion of physical strength? Almost all, if not all, of our experience and observation points that way, and forbids us to affirm the contrary. So we must waver be-

tween these two possibilities until a more perfect knowledge solves the difficulty; trusting, meanwhile, to the natural action of our souls which we ought not dogmatically to limit except upon exact knowledge which here does not exist. To take an instance: have we a right to pray for rain? In desperate circumstances, when, as sometimes happens in hot countries, it is rain or death, the human heart cries out for rain. Will any such prayer have any effect in bringing rain? We cannot tell. We may say no, but that does not settle it; or yes, but that does not settle it. Only the truth, the reality, can settle it, and that we do not know at present. All such prayers are justifiable where they are natural. We are right, in any case of doubt, to follow our instinctive desire and sympathy, to pray, if we can; and by praying I mean to move with all the strength of our natures towards the accomplishment of our need, using all our powers of body—so far every one would go with me in thought,—and all our powers of soul; also our hope, our faith, our supplication to the Being above us. Are not these real powers? I believe they are, and by what right any one can limit their possible operation I cannot understand.

Praying for rain is an instance of prayer, or communion with God, in its relations with material nature; pure and simple. Prayer, or communion with God, as relating us with man, is another point for us to consider; and between these two points

lie a multitude of mixed cases. Thus the prayer for our daily bread not only connects us with material nature, but with man. Our getting our daily bread depends, under God, on material nature, and on human nature. No soil, sunshine, or rain, then no bread; and no industry, good-will, honesty, or social order, then no bread, even if nature do her part. Our prayer for daily bread includes the recognition of God as the sustainer of our bodies, and a petition that nature keep her constancy, and man his virtue, that we may live and not die.

As far as it relates to material nature, it comes under the head we have been considering; as far as it relates to man, it offers us a new question. What is the extent and what the limit of our relation through prayer with our fellow-men? Can we be really related with our fellow-men through prayer and communion with God? That we are intimately related with our fellow-men is a plain fact of experience; we affect them, and they us; by word, by act, by writing, and in other ways. A thought written down by Plato in Athens can move me, after two thousand years have passed, to laughter or to tears. The thought of Hebrew law-givers, prophets, psalmists, and of that chiefest Hebrew who founded our religion, affects and colors the inward life of whole nations and continents up to this day. This is a fact of observation which cannot be denied by any one acquainted with the subject The question for us is, then,

Can we influence our fellow-men directly through prayer and communion with God, beyond and outside of those channels and organs of communication known to our ordinary experience, such as speech, act, writing, tradition, and so on? Can we, for instance, affect by our prayer and communion with God one parted by distance or by death from us? That is another of those questions which show us the present limits of our religious thought. We cannot tell. I know of no established facts which can prove the affirmative of this; on the other hand, we have not the knowledge requisite to deny it authoritatively. In our present state of knowledge, our minds must waver as to the possibility of such influence. Practically we are right in hoping and believing, if such faith be possible for us, that we may so influence the distant and departed by our prayer and communion with God; for it is a true sympathy in us which goes out towards them, and a true hope, and that in the absence of knowledge ought to guide us. We have no right dogmatically to limit the scope of our prayer except upon exact knowledge. Our prayer is naturally and rightly coextensive with our desire and sympathy, is our sympathy deepened, heightened, and strengthened by the conscious power and effort of our hearts turned towards God.

And now we must approach that great mystery which we cannot avoid except by wilfully ignoring

it, — the problem of free-will and Providence. If God order all things well, and in him there be no variableness, neither shadow of turning, and if his Providence be over all and include all, even ourselves, what room is there for my prayer? How can I affect Providence, how can I affect myself, who am a part of Providence? how can my prayer be other than an illusion, in which Providence impels me, and determines my every thought and act, yet inspires me with a delusive sense of free, responsible life? How can there be an absolute Providence, foreseeing and foreordaining all things, and yet my soul be free, within certain limits, to do right or wrong, free to determine itself? We are not absolutely free, we have not the power of indifferent choice, for the eternal reality and right exists, and every time we err or sin, we strike our heads against the everlasting truth; and every time we think we do right, we are upheld by the same everlasting power; there is that tremendous balance on the side of truth and right. But the question is, Have we any freedom of choice at all? any power at all to determine ourselves? The dilemma of Providence and free-will is not determined by the *quantity* of choice; if we think we have the least possible quantity of power to determine ourselves, then this dilemma is forced upon us. Is there any way of overthrowing the dilemma, and saving both parts of it? Can we affirm the existence of an all-foreseeing, foreordaining, all-inclusive

Providence, a Providence including us and every part of us, every minutest motion of our bodies, minds, and hearts, and at the same time affirm any freedom of moral choice in us? I do not see how we can reconcile these two thoughts. What, then, shall we think about it? Must we give up or modify our idea of Providence? or must we give up our free souls, and regard all our life as a foreordained and absolutely fixed development, and all our varying experience, our hope, and fear, and sense of sin, and remorse, and prayer, and action, and aspiration, as the mere light and shade, and variegation of our life's scroll as it is unrolled by the Almighty's hand? The question is between our conception of Providence as an absolutely fixed predetermination, and our free-will. On the side of free-will, we have the witness of our consciousness to our free and personal nature, the sense of duty, the sense of sin, the joy of conscious well-doing, the aspiration and prayer for love and holiness; in a word, our conscience and our personality testify to us that we are free agents, and not mere instruments in the hands of a higher power. To deny our free-will, we must deny the integrity of our consciousness, and the truth of our experience, of our deepest and highest experience. On the other hand, we have the thought that perfection demands that God should absolutely include all things in himself, either potentially or actually. But this thought, that the existence of any free personal

being other than God is a diminution of his perfection and glory, seems a doubtful one. There is something terribly mechanical in this view of Providence as an absolute predetermination; and between that conception, and the conception of God as endowing his children with something of his own free and personal nature, we cannot but choose the latter as the more divine conception. At any rate, between the plain witness of our consciousness, that we are free agents, responsible beings, and an *a priori* speculation about the nature of Providence, which we can at most only partially apprehend, I think we are bound to accept the witness of our consciousness. We may be justified in affirming the apparent contradiction of an absolutely foreseeing and foreordaining Providence and the existence of free-will in man, trusting that this contradiction will be harmonized by a fuller knowledge. But, at any rate, by every rule of scientific method, we are bound to recognize the constant witness of our consciousness. And may we not thus conceive the relations of the human soul with God, that we are the children of God, in a very essential sense, that God gives man something of his own original freedom and personality, that as he is the first and infinite cause, and the original person, so are we second and finite causes, and derived persons? This is hard to believe, but no harder than to believe that God himself exists, or that anything exists which, as I have said, is

inconceivable *a priori*, though certain through our experience and consciousness. And this conception seems to me to be the Christian conception of God and man, — God the Father, man his child.

It is on this consciousness and faith of the essential oneness of our nature with God, and the possibility of our drawing ever nearer to his infinite perfection, that our communion with God rests.

Let us consider some of the indications and modes of this communion. Beyond those self-regarding functions which are necessary to our individual life, we find in ourselves tendencies and aspirations stretching outward and upward to a larger life. We see this in a degree in our common experience. Jesus says that the love of one's neighbor, and one's self is like unto the love of God. When, unsatisfied with the mere preservation of our bodies, we become conscious of the worth of our human nature, and of the preciousness of our various powers, and out of love for ourselves seek to develop ourselves, and to become better men, there is in that desire for personal perfection a kind of largeness and loftiness bordering on the religious. The effort toward the harmonious development of all our powers brings us into universal relations. In all effort after self-perfection, we see a kind of motion toward communion with God, a striving to lift one's self above one's self to a higher life. This self-love and self-culture become distinctly religious, when we regard

ourselves as the children of God, and our natures as his gift, and every new development of our nature as glorifying him by fulfilling his purpose, — when we seek to be perfect as God is perfect.

We see this larger life more plainly, however, more clearly hinting at communion with God, in the love of others. We see it most familiarly in our domestic life. Why does one member of a family work, watch, and endure for the rest of the family, flinching neither from pain nor the danger of death in serving it? It is because his life is as large as that. There is the consciousness of his kindred abiding in his heart, and inspiring him. If to the written annals of human history were added its unwritten story, what a sweetness of unselfish devotion, of hidden and pure service, would rise from the home-life of humanity! What a multitude of patient martyrs would be added to the saintly roll! Not in vain their service, but for the health of their souls, and of those whom they have served. Their virtue it is which keeps society together, and makes possible the triumphs of humanity. And we see this love of our neighbor grown to a broader and diviner spirit in the patriot, who in war or peace carries the unselfish consciousness of his country in his heart. Not in vain the patriot's prayer and effort, though his name be known to few, for the sacred spirit which is in him alone saves and carries forward the nation. And we see it also in the Christian, who is a Christian

indeed. Whence comes the zeal of this man? What motive has he? Why does he act as he does? To some it is foolishness, to others madness; to those only is his action clear who see the consciousness of Christ's great household present in his heart; hence his labor, not in vain, though he live and die obscure. Happy is he in his faithful service, helping forward the work at his post, and rejoicing in that larger life, in his fellowship with the servants of God. And that human religious fellowship, which is most like the divine communion, includes the love of all humanity, past, present, and to come, sinners and saints, infidels and believers, enemies and friends, for nothing less can the Christian fellowship aim at without being faithless to the master.

These are instances of those human relations, that love of ourselves and our neighbors, which, as Jesus says, are like unto our divine relations, our love of God. And these human relations lead us up to heaven's door. The ties of family, of country, of church, and the rest, make us partakers of the strength of those with whom we are united. In all these relations by as much as we give to our fellow-men thus associated with us, we receive from them. Through word, act, institution, book, law, usage, through common study, worship, and action, we receive into ourselves the strength of others, and with them mount to a higher life.

But our aspirations are not fully satisfied with

this earthly fellowship. We cannot rest in that. We seek to know the truth that we may help ourselves and our neighbors — that is the human love of truth, — but we cannot stop there. A more absolute desire fills us to know the truth as it is, — the truth of God; not only that we may bless ourselves and our neighbors with it, but for its own sake, as the truth of God. That is the divine love of truth. We see how nearly related this human and this divine love are. A man thinks and studies that he may help his own and his neighbors' doubts, and enlighten himself and them; but in that study he finds a being, a reality, a truth, which is not himself, or his fellow-man; his desire expands, he feels a new prompting, he seeks the truth for its own sake, the truth of God. And again, in our moral life, we seek to live according to the law of our own natures, and to the law of righteousness, resulting from our relations with our fellow-men, — that is the human love of righteousness, approaching the divine; but there stirs in us a higher desire, a desire for holiness, for absolute perfection, to live according to the law of God, — that is the divine love of righteousness. And again, we love ourselves and our fellow-men; our hearts desire a conscious unity of life, a personal unity in ourselves, and a larger unity in the love of others — that is the human love, — but we cannot stop there; there is a fulness of life beyond our human fellowship towards which our natures

reach. They seek a conscious unity with the life of God.

These are instances of our religious aspiration. What can satisfy our love of truth? Can we draw any limit to that aspiration? We can draw no limit; nothing but the universal truth can satisfy it. What can satisfy our love of holiness? Can we draw any limit to that? No, we can draw no limit. Nothing but the universal holiness, the absolute perfection, can satisfy it. And our love, that which we name love with no addition, our personal fellowship of united life, we can draw no limit to the reach of that. The universal life and love alone can fill it.

But these aspirations are only different phases of the same personal life. My aspiration after the truth means really myself aspiring after the truth. My aspiration after holiness means really myself aspiring after holiness; and so of love. These aspirations have no real existence apart from me. They are *myself*, my personality, exercising different functions, myself in my supreme relations. And so of this universal truth, holiness, and life, after which I aspire. What is truth? It is the quality of real existence. What is holiness? The quality of perfectly directed personal life. What love? The quality or state of united life. Truth, holiness, love, these are all qualities, not substances. There can be no truth apart from real existence, nor holiness, nor love, apart from personal exist-

ence. In aspiring after the universal truth, holiness, and love, we aspire after the living, personal God, and we approach him, and commune with him, in proportion as we attain to the true, holy, and loving life. As Jesus says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind,"—with all thy nature; and by as much as we love him, we approach him and commune with him.

These aspirations after God draw us to him, and witness to our relationship with him; and if we consult our inward experience, we find another kind of facts opposite to our aspirations, yet inwardly related with them, — the facts of sin, of conscious wrong-doing. What is sin? It is the disregard of our own souls, of man, and of God, by us. We may sin from selfishness, as when a man cheats another man to enrich himself, disregarding his neighbor, his own soul, and his God. We may sin from affection for others, as when a man cheats another to enrich his wife and children, disregarding his own soul, his neighbor, and his God. Or we may sin out of a wrong affection for God, as when a man lies to his neighbor about religion for God's sake, hoping to help God's earthly kingdom by his lying, and so disregards his neighbor, his own soul, and the holy spirit prompting him to truth. As the holy life is the regard, or in its highest degree the love, of our own souls, of man, and of God, so the sinful life

is the disregard, and in its fiercest degree the hatred, of our own souls, of man, and of God. Our memories and consciences bear witness enough to the existence of sin in all of us. What does this fact of sin in us mean? Is it merely being apart from God and man, unrelated with them? No, it is the *dis*-uniting of that which is related; it is *dis*-union from God and man. Our repentant thoughts are so many voices calling to us, "You have broken the bond and covenant which bound you to your Father and your brethren. Go back and be re-united with them." So the witness of sin and of repentance echoes the witness of our holy aspiration, and declares our relationship with the Father.

The Christian consciousness is the consciousness of our essential oneness with God and man. That is the life present to our hope and prayer; but along with that Christian consciousness we have another, — the consciousness of our actual condition; and between that eternal life at one with God, and our actual inner state, there is great disparity. By prayer and effort we seek to make these two things one. By faith in ourselves as the children of God, in our fellow-men as our brethren, in Christ as our eldest brother, and in God as our Father, we seek to rise into that eternal life. By our personal prayer and effort, by the help of holier brethren, of prophets, poets, saints, and inspired men, by all the institutions organized for righteous

ends, by common prayer, and worship, and action, in a word, by all human helps, and by the help of God, we seek the eternal life, which is oneness of life with God and all his creatures; we seek to receive His nature into ours, and to bring our discordant being into harmony with his perfection. His presence, like the sun, drives out the evil-doers from our hearts, and quickens us to renewed life. Francis Bacon in one of his essays figures well this power of faith in God upon our natures. "Take an example," he says, "of a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man; who to him is instead of a *God*, or *melior natura;* which courage is manifestly such as that creature, without that confidence of a better nature than his own, could never attain. So man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon divine protection and favor, gathereth a force and faith, which human nature in itself could not obtain."

This communion, this oneness with God, towards which our prayer tends, our human mortal nature attains only in a faint degree. To most of us it is a reality rather to our thought and hope than in fulfilment; yet there are not wanting in our experience times of resignation, of conquest over temptation, of devotion to truth and duty, of self-sacrifice, of forgiveness of those who have injured us, of rejoicing in God's work and will, when our hearts lean upon no human arm, but on the ever-

lasting. Most of us are most vividly conscious of God's presence with us, in our struggle with temptation, and in our resignation under trial. When we pray "Thy will be done," it is most frequently with the thought that the evil in us may be subdued, or our hearts resigned. But there is a higher consciousness than that, — to pray rejoicingly that God's will may be done. In some rare moments in our own experience, in the lives of holier men, and above all in Jesus Christ, we see this rejoicing in the life of God, a conscious oneness of life with him. Thy will, thy glorious will, be done, sings the rejoicing heart. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, . . . for so it seemed good in thy sight." That glad oneness of life with God, and delight in his work, that is the communion with him towards which our prayers tend, that the eternal life which by God's grace we hope may be revealed in us.

FAITHFULNESS.

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." — MATT. XXIV., 12, 13.

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." The Bible is full of utterances which reach beyond their special application, which have a human or a divine truth in them, besides their historical truth or fitness, which have a meaning for every human heart wherever found. Hence the universal character of the Bible, whose burden rising from the depths of human nature speaks to human nature everywhere. Hence its wealth as a text-book for the Christian Church, which by the general judgment and selection of fifty generations has placed it at the head of its sacred books, and from it drawn a constant inspiration. In the Bible we have recorded for our instruction the deepest religious experience of our race, so far as our view extends; hence its power over us. In its pages are found oracles which speak the fitting word for all the varied experiences

of the soul, — which give suggestion, warning, encouragement, consolation, peace, strength, where they are needed.

Among the warning oracles whose suggestiveness is always fresh, and which never lack a meaning, is this prophecy of the Saviour: "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Doubtless, since the world began, this has been so. The young soul, fresh and hopeful, sings its "songs of innocence"; all is fair, and bright, and beautiful, and heaven near at hand; the lambs, the flowers, the gay sunshine, the rainbow, and the stars, — these figure the world to him. The whole year round is to him one spring-time, and the human heart the home of "mercy, pity, peace, and love." The dark cloud of evil distantly seen, is to him only a cloud, and he wonders that men should fear it. The cloud rolls up and bursts upon him, his years pass by and bring their sorrows, and his soul must needs sing now the bitter "songs of experience." The harmless lambs, with which his fancy played, are turned to tigers. His human world is now no longer peace and love, but cruelty and jealousy, harlotry and envy, and avarice, and secresy, and even over the face of heaven there is a mist obscuring the Divine image. His heart waxes cold and faint at the iniquity which abounds around him.

Doubtless something like this has been the experience of the human soul since the world began, and yet it sometimes seems as though our time

especially needed this voice of warning; as though, with our peaceful and refined civilization, the iniquity abounding in us and in the world spread its despair more subtly and invisibly, and needed to be more vigilantly guarded against, than in ruder times, when its hand was heavier, and its action more violent, and its persecution more open and apparent. What in rude times is open war, under a more peaceful civilization becomes more and more an inward conflict, lacking not only the violence of the older style, but also something of its stir, its sustaining excitement, its direct fame and glory. The inward conflict, being more private, hidden, and secret, its results more doubtful, and more difficult to discern, seems to call for a more single motive, and a deeper constancy of purpose, and a deeper consolation and reward, than when the issues were more plainly made, the strife more open, the weapons more carnal, and the action more violent. To be a martyr on a single and plain issue, has not only its terrors, but its sustaining inspiration. But to keep steadfast to our principles and to our faith; to keep the sacred fire burning in our hearts amidst obscurity and confusion, with friends and foes mixed up around us, so that we can hardly tell them from each other, and are in constant danger of betrayal; amidst doubtful and perplexing issues, with everything in question; amid the confusion of tongues, the scorning of those who are at ease, the noisy murmuring of the ignor-

ant, the subtle arguments of sophistry, the secret plots of grasping men, the corruption of the weak and dishonest, and all the rest, to keep a steadfast and a living heart amid the manifold influences of the ignorance and error and iniquity abounding in our times, seems to call for a specially abundant and many-sided strength. In ruder times, human nature is simpler and undeveloped; hence life is simpler, its righteousness is simpler, the perversion of righteousness, iniquity, is simpler. With every new development of human nature, every new science and art and power and activity, human life grows more complex; its possibility of excellence is enlarged, and its possibility of iniquity also. Each growth in human nature adds new forms of virtue and new forms of vice to the old catalogue. The new development, if it be true, brings with it, indeed, a truth and power of its own, which is a positive addition to our life; but it also occasions new perversions after its own kind, new faults and new danger, and needs new safeguards. And so our developing peaceful civilization brings with it a moral complexity which calls for a more developed and many-sided virtue than the simpler times called for. Our characters growing more complex, the iniquity in us confused with the rest of our character is more disguised and hidden. The persecution of the righteous and of righteousness is now not so much open violence, as a kind of moral pressure, a deadening influence, the subtle effect of weak or

unrighteous character, working with the power of sympathy upon others. The iniquity is rather felt than seen, and in its atmosphere the heart grows cold and lifeless, without knowing why. The strife is in word, the strength must come from within.

Thus, in our personal experience, we desire to do right, but the temptation comes, and we do wrong; we repent, and feel again the desire of righteousness; again the temptation comes, and again we yield, and because of the iniquity in us, which thus baffles our resolution, our love may begin to wax cold, our repentance may grow weaker and shallower, our sin more frequent, until at last the very desire of that righteousness may not only wax cold but die, and forsake our soul, until called back by some experience, some word of God more powerful than the soul's lifelessness wakens it. What is it that can guard us against this loss of heart, against this dying of the soul? Experience brings the struggle surely and inevitably to every soul, the struggle ending for us only with our breath. What strength have we to rely upon to meet it? If we have failed before, does not experience prophesy more failure for us? Can we hope to be stronger than before? We might, perhaps, have little ground for hope, if we consulted only our own experience of failure. Therein lies the strength of great examples, that they give us a more complete experience of human life than our own memory can give us. They show righteous-

ness itself in its own beauty and native truth, apart from ourselves, and our own power or weakness. To keep our love from waxing cold, and dying from the iniquity in us, we must keep in mind the objects of our love, the righteousness which we desired; we must possess our minds with its excellence in itself apart from our attainment of it, as having its preciousness eternal, whether we can reach to it or not, — that thus we may love even its courts and neighborhood, and keep our faces towards it, lest the poor soul be lost in the outer darkness, and its hope fail. And we can draw strength also through sympathy, by faith in those whose souls have been tried like ours, and who have kept steadfast under it. Theirs is a human help, more visible and tangible, and in some ways more suited to our human nature than the divine truth in itself regarded in its height and mystery.

And if our soul be larger than ourselves, and will not rest in private aspiration, but looks out with a high sympathy upon its brethren, then in the first flush of its larger love it desires the public righteousness, — that the world of men, with which it feels itself one, may be righteous; that every evil may be put down, and justice and peace and good-will and a pure glory prevail throughout society. The youth chooses his field, — the Church, the State, the court, the market, or the general social life of his neighborhood. He studies the

principles of his work. He enters it. But he finds this part of it not to his taste,—too much iniquity in it, a very mixed state of men and things connected with it, not much like his first notions of it. He tries another part, and behold it is the same there. The same kind of human being with all his peculiarities is there also. His love waxes cold; this is not what he bargained for. He believes in the principles, he says, but this grimy work, and the practices of some of those engaged in it with whom he is brought into contact, are too much for him. And so, perhaps, he gives up his work, and tries something else. But there again, he finds the same old Adam with whom he met before,—men with different coats, and answering to different names and professions, and with a variation of habits, but very like the others. If he can afford it, he perhaps retires from the field to let mankind take care of itself, and tries no more than to take care of himself. If he cannot afford to leave his work, he stays in it, and does its business for such advantages of support and reputation as may come from it, or from a severe sense of duty; but his heart grows faint in it, his public soul waxes cold, his interest dies out.

Such is the danger of all our public life. All our institutions are simply ourselves associated for a certain end along with such association as may be possible with men of other times and other lands. All our private life is simply ourselves,

with such natures as we may be endowed with, in certain relations with the truth and with other souls, all our public life simply ourselves associated with other men, for certain common ends, and both in our private and our public life, the human basis of all our aspiration, and faith, and love, is this human nature of ours. Our aspiration takes its winged flight only to be checked and brought to earth again by this heavy weight of our earthly nature. The divine Providence seems to say to us, Your aspiration is a fine thing; let us see how strong it is; how much weight it will carry. And then Providence puts our human nature, with all its attendant ignorance and iniquity, upon our back, and bids us fly with that. We think the fault is in our circumstances, or our work, or our profession; but no, it is in ourselves, and our neighbors, in our human nature itself. Landsman, seaman, craftsman, statesman, churchman, we may turn any one of these, but we cannot turn ourselves in that way, nor turn out the iniquity in us, nor can we in any work, or any institution, find a place free from these human and earthly conditions. The iniquity which chills the heart, enters every part of human life, because it has its source in human nature.

Hence the struggle between iniquity and our soul's health is sure alike, in our personal hearts and in all our life. We must be prepared to meet this danger, and be on our guard against it every-

where. If there is one moral sickness which infects at least our public life more than another, it is this deadening of the heart, this waxing cold because of the weakness and iniquity we meet with everywhere. We all want the republic to be justly administered; but we are very apt to want somebody else to do the necessary work, to take the rubs, to endure the slanders, and opposition, and other incidental hardships, while we, like the gods of whom Epicurus taught, stand outside and condemn the follies of those who are engaged in the work. We all would be very glad to have the kingdom of God established upon earth, the truth of God discovered and proclaimed, and human nature enlightened and inspired and glorified, and the holy church universal, mankind one family of the faithful,—to have all this a reality; but any actual work or effort toward such an end we are very apt to want somebody else to do; any incidental studying, travelling, fighting, working, paying, thinking, or acting, we prefer some one else to do, while we enjoy their inevitable blunders and shortcomings. And so with schools, and courts, and arts, and all the rest.

But if we thus act, let us know ourselves for what we are, and not cover our weakness by any fine names of refinement, or culture, or a sensitive morality. We may have culture and refinement, and a certain moral sensitiveness, but none the less is the surrender of our duty, weakness, and deser-

tion. In yielding to any iniquity around us, we are surrendering our souls, and not only is the work which we ought to do left undone, but our own souls are sickened by our neglecting it. By neglecting the duty which we owe, because of the iniquity which we find associated with it, we become the aiders and abetters of that iniquity. We are not neutral, for responsibility destroys neutrality. Is he a neutral who surrenders his post to the enemy? If he do it under anything less than necessity, we do not call him a neutral, but something worse.

That iniquity penetrates our human life and our human nature, is a plain fact of experience. That it has a deadening influence upon the soul, and presses hard upon our private and our public virtue, is another plain fact. It chills our faith and love and hope, and slackens the beating of our heart. But if we yield to it, what then? If our public love, or private love, or personal aspiration and faith wax cold, what does that mean? It means no less than the failing of the soul itself,—so much less soul, so much less life, iniquity the master of us. If this process were complete, the spiritual life would end. The only balance to the iniquity in the world is the love and truth in it; the only remedy for it is in the increase of that love and truth. If iniquity abound, and our love wax cold then by our coldness we make the iniquity to abound the more. Rather if iniquity

abound, grace should much more abound; and as the iniquity is the perversion of the human nature, so the grace which should overcome it must come from the righteous human nature. Heaven puts us in the field together, not that we may help the iniquity by yielding our souls to its despair, but that by our faithfulness we may overcome it.

This, then, is a danger which we must all meet throughout our life, against which we must be constantly on guard, and against which we must summon up all our spiritual strength, and call in all the allies of our souls; for do what we will, we shall sometimes feel the chill and faintness, and our endurance will be difficult. And of the sources whence we may draw help, I will name again the meditation of the truth. This is an inspiration known alike to the simple and the learned. "This is right; this I ought to do; this that I see before me is the truth, for me to obey." Such thoughts as these, the sight of the truth itself as it lies before us, all this braces our souls. We may think, "I have tried this before, and failed; why try again? I shall probably fail again;" or, "I cannot do this, nobody will expect it of me;" or, "Everybody will laugh at me,"—and all the sophistries of weakness. But if we hold the truth of the matter steadily before our conscience, if we keep our duty and the right in sight, then these cowardly doubts may play and flicker around it; but there is a power in us holding us, inspiring us, sustaining us against ini-

quity. The divine reality present to our souls, however imperfectly it may dwell in them, will yet strengthen us against evil; and with this thought of the truth and right, our faith will associate whatever of fatherly care and protection and comfort we may trust to be in God. And like unto this divine aid is the help of our fellow-men, — the example, the word, the faith, the love of others tried like us. This is a great part of the strength of the Church, that it consciously associates and unites the faith and prayer and effort of mankind towards holy ends. This human help is, as I have said, in some ways more suited to our common nature than the direct inspiration of the truth. Often we need the Elder Brother to lead us to the Father; and never more, perhaps, than when our heart is cold at our own or others' sinfulness. The bitterness with which we think on our own or others' iniquity, the sorrow over the evil in our human nature, is cured by the sight of human goodness in some better brother. Thus are the holy memories of mankind, the sacred life of the past, a present inspiration and a living power.

And in our public faith and love, if we would endure, we must there also see the truth, keep our object and our purpose before us in itself, apart from our success or failure. We must first and chiefly ask, What is to be done? and keep that object steadily before us; and next, How can I do it? and to that give our patience and our strength;

and if we would endure to the end, we must be content to recognize the worth of every kind of service, from the direct and mastering action, down to the simple protest or sympathy of the soul. We must not ask too eagerly for the outward sign, nor be too discouraged at its absence; but we must fill out our sight with spiritual discernment, must sometimes join in forlorn hopes, and be content with almost no result. And here, too, we may find abundant help from those who have gone before us.

And he who shall endure unto the end, and meet the iniquity within and around him, and fulfil his private and his public life in spite of it, he shall be saved, and he shall save others also.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

What is the question between the upholders of the free principle in religion and the upholders of the various despotic principles prevalent in many churches? The question is, What is the last earthly appeal in religion? It is not, What is the divine appeal? The divine authority every one alike acknowledges to be the truth of God. Roman Catholic, Calvinist, Unitarian, and the rest, all alike acknowledge the truth of God, and the reality of his world, to be the divine, final, and absolute authority. But the question lies wholly upon the human side: What is the last earthly appeal, on what, humanly speaking, do we in the last resort base our religion? The upholders of religious absolutism are apt to confuse the question, by confounding the divine and human sides of it. The authority of God's truth and of the Roman Catholic Church, says the Roman Catholic, as though they were identical; but the one is divine, the other earthly. And it is the earthly authority alone about which we differ.

What, then, is the last earthly appeal in religion? In Christendom, there are four principal answers to this question. There are those who base religion, first, on the Church; second, on the Bible; third, on the person Jesus Christ; fourth, on the human spirit itself, directly related with the truth. Observe that these are all realities; the Church is a reality, and the Bible and Jesus Christ and the human spirit are realities. It is not, Do we believe in these realities? but, How do we believe in them, and how do we relate them?

People talk of the coming conflict between Romanism and Protestantism; but the conflict has already come. It is but one phase of the conflict between religious absolutism and religious liberty, which existed long before Luther's day, and which is now going on actively, not only between Romanism and Protestantism, but inside of Protestantism, to some degree in all churches and religions the world over. Whether with us it will again come to carnal blows and bloody battles, is an incidental question. The conflict is now affecting men's souls, which is the main matter. You may cut down a plant with a knife, or you may put it in the dark, out of the sunshine and the rain, and let it pine and wither; and so with men: you may kill them by war, and you may also sap their souls with false doctrine, which will bear fruit after its own kind. And that men prize their soul's life above their body's life they show, themselves, when they

are willing to fight for their principles, for their soul's life. The root of religious wars lies in the opposite religious faiths which men hold. But these faiths, whether they result in war or not, work each its own effect upon the soul which holds it, and upon the public character. The conflict is always going on inwardly, whether it break out upon the surface or not.

On these four bases, and various combinations of them, men ground their faith, and on them churches have grown up and are now growing. Each one of these principles has its effect upon the private soul after its kind, and upon the public character, upon the present life of society, and upon the future.

Let us look at each of the four bases, — first, the Church. Roman Catholics, Greek Churchmen, I believe, and High Churchmen, and perhaps others, appeal in the last resort to the church, as final and absolute authority. Each understands the church differently. The new Romanism puts the whole power over the "faith and morals" of mankind, over the conscience and the conduct of the human race, in the hands of its chief priest, the Pope. The older Romanism vested the same power, not in one autocrat, but in an oligarchy of bishops. The Greek Church and the High Churchman appeal to the decisions of the earlier councils as final. But all, in one form or another, make the church supreme over the conscience and the mind of men. But what is the church of man, which they thus

make supreme over man? For it is not the church of God, the holy city of the blessed, the society of perfect souls. It is not the inner church to which they ascribe this authority, though they often speak as if it were; but it is the outward church, the church of man, the earthly representative of the mystical city, the actual ecclesiastical corporation. Now what is this church of man? Is it anything else than a certain number of men, associated for religion? Even granting Jesus to be God, his presence on the earth was only for a few years. All the rest of the time the church, as an actual institution, has consisted entirely of human beings. What essential difference does it make how many of them there are? The ocean is immeasurably larger than one drop of water, but for all its volume it is still the same water as the drop. So one hundred millions of men, multiplied one hundred times, if you will, gives us nothing more than man. The *semper, ab omnibus, ubique*, granting it to be true, gives us only man after all. The church to which this appeal is made is an institution consisting of men. When we analyze it, then, the appeal of the church means the appeal to an association of men, or to its government. Those who affirm the church to be supreme over the human soul assume a final and absolute authority, not in God only, but in a human institution also, in a certain body of men, or its elected officers.

Second, the Bible. What is the Bible? It is

confessedly composed of the writings of certain Hebrews, from very early times to a short time after Christ. These writings every one acknowledges to be the work of men, conceived in human language, written down by human hands. They do indeed contain the life of others than the writers; they contain the life of those of whom these writers wrote; but even that life comes to us through these writers. And of those of whom they wrote, one only, Jesus Christ, is claimed by anybody to be God; the others, all the men of the Old Testament, and the apostles in the New, all allow to be men. Even if Jesus were God, he did not write the Old Testament; neither did he write the New Testament, however much it may have been inspired by him. The New Testament was written of him, not by him, but by certain persons confessedly human; and it is not to his writings, but to their writings, and to the writings of their ancient compatriots, that appeal is made when the Bible is set up as infallible. Is the creature more than the Creator? Can a human thing be more than the human being whence it came? a book more than its author? Not all the reasoning in the world can shake the simple fact, that a book is a human thing derived from a human being, and that any divine truth which there may be in it must have been in the man first. A book means the man or men whence it came; it cannot mean more than its original. Grant the Bible to have

been inspired by God, and him to have been its first cause and divine original, yet the inspiration confessedly passed through men, and must have been humanized in doing so. These men are the human original of the Bible. Those, therefore, who affirm the Bible to be supreme over the conscience assert a final authority over all men's souls, not only in God and his truth, but in certain Hebrew men also.

Third, there are those who consider the person Jesus to be supreme over all men's consciences. This is the position, I should judge, of many Unitarians, especially among the elders, and perhaps of Dr. Channing; though it is hard to get at their precise thought here, if, indeed, it be precise. Perhaps the question was not so strongly forced home to them as it is to us, and so their thought was less defined. For myself, believing Jesus to be man, and under human conditions, it is impossible for me to conceive a final and absolute authority to be in him. But even on the supposition that Jesus is God, and possesses absolute authority, is it possible for us to appeal to it? Is there any medium between him and us, other than a human one. We may appeal to his recorded words, but those came to us through men. We may appeal to the church, as the possessor of the organic Christian tradition, but the church too, at any rate since Christ's time, consists solely of men. And so of all the possible mediums between him and us,—they are all human,

and his authority, even if divine and absolute in itself, must be humanized in passing through these men before it reaches us; that is, must lose its absolute quality. Supposing such an authority to exist in Jesus, we must, in order to have it reach us and be operative, deify the medium through which it reaches us; we must either deify the church as the Roman Catholics do, or the Bible or New Testament as some Protestants do, or at any rate that part of the New Testament ascribed directly to Jesus, as some Unitarians incline to do. But no one will assert even those words put by the Evangelists in the mouth of Jesus to have been written by him; but all acknowledge them to have come to us through, at the very least, one man, the writer. And the divine and absolute authority is not a thing to rest on probability, as that this writer in any special case probably reported it right,—for that *probably* brings in the very human element, which humanizes the absolute. The authority of Jesus, even if originally absolute, to be operative, must reach us through an absolute medium. To affirm it, we must affirm an absolute authority in the men through whom it comes to us.

Fourth, there are those who rest religion, at the last earthly appeal, upon the human spirit itself, directly and responsibly related with the truth of God and the reality of his world; upon the integrity of the human conscience, inwardly related with the divine spirit. The personal watchword of this

position is, "Salvation by faith, not by conformity to human ordinances and established observances, but by the free loyalty of the spirit to the truth." The right of private judgment is the same thing on the intellectual side. Man, the child of God, is its gospel. Since Luther broke the Roman absolutism in Western Europe, this faith has been largely present in the Protestant part of Christendom, along with much else which tradition has mixed with it, but with which it cannot unite, always present in some measure, modifying, reforming, inspiring one part after another of Protestantism. "Here I stand: I cannot otherwise: God help me: Amen." That faith broke Rome; that faith is still working in Christendom.

How, then, is this last faith, which, while making its final and divine appeal to the truth of God, makes its last human appeal to the personal conscience itself, related with the others which we have been considering, — first, with that faith which makes the church supreme over all consciences? The outward church which is here appealed to simply means, as we have seen, a certain number of men religiously associated, simply a part of mankind. To give to a part of mankind absolute dominion over the consciences of the rest of mankind necessarily denies the divine spirit in the rest of mankind; denies them their gospel birthright, and puts above them, not only the divine authority, but a human absolutism as well. This absolutism va-

ries in its form. It may vest the whole power in one Pope, which is the present Roman form, the most developed form of tyranny, only saved from being intolerable by the absence of power in the Pope to enforce his decrees ; or it may vest it in a body of bishops, or other officers. The more remote and the more vague the body in which the authority rests, the greater the practical liberty, but the form makes no essential difference in the principle. Wherever an absolute authority is claimed for the church over my conscience, there my gospel birthright is denied ; and in place of God and his truth is put a body of men and their commandments, — a human absolutism.

And those who appeal in this way to the Bible, as final over the private conscience, do the like. The Bible, as we have seen, has a human original, as well as a divine original. It means the men from whence it came, of whom and by whom it was written. To affirm it then to be final over my conscience necessarily denies my right of conscience, subjects me and the spirit in me to certain Hebrew men. It is essentially the same human absolutism as that of the infallible church. It allows us greater practical liberty indeed, for the authority is so remote, and the contents of it so varied, that unless supplemented by some infallible interpreter and agent, there is a wide range of interpretation and action possible. From the book of Genesis to Revelation there is room for a very

considerable breadth of speculation both in faith and morals. We may be polygamists with Abraham, as the Mormons are; we may hew down the heathen with Joshua and Samuel, as our forefathers did; we may hold slaves with the Israelites, and, perhaps, the early Christians, as the Southerners did; we may curse our enemies with some of the Psalmists, and with Paul, as all incline to do; and we may believe a great variety of things, and all piously and properly, if it be true that the whole Bible is the absolute Word of God, and one part of it as good as any other. And even if in our private interpretation we ascribe to the Bible a doctrine not found in it at all, there is yet no human authority to overrule us, and we may go on unchecked. In an infallible church, such a heresy is checked at once by the actual government. But without such an interpreter and agent, it may exist freely. So when the Reformers denied the infallibility of the church, and, letting the infallibility of the Bible remain, affirmed the right of private interpretation, it was as if we should deny the authority of the United States government, while still affirming the authority of our written constitution, with the right of each one to interpret it by his own mind. Evidently that meant a much larger practical liberty than before, — it meant the breaking up of the existing organization and government of the church.

There is then more room in this position which

makes the Bible infallible, than in that which makes the church so. The men who by it rule my conscience are not living. There is no human sanction to their word, no anathema can come from them, or imprisonment, or coercion. They are remote. We must go to them if we would know their meaning. They do not stand over us with direct power in their hand. But yet the principle is the same. And though the yoke would seem comparatively easy, the authority being so remote, yet experience shows us that it constantly tends to gather a present executive power about itself, and that this form of absolutism can gall and warp and crush souls and people with terrible power.

Thirdly, the position of those who ascribe this authority over the conscience to Jesus Christ is open to a like objection, if Jesus be man, as I believe. But even if he be God himself, the Eternal Word incarnate, his authority cannot reach us except through a human medium, and hence cannot be operative.

The question, then, between the upholders of the free principle in religion, and those who rest in any human being or thing, a final authority over the conscience, apart from persuasion and conviction, the question between us is, Are we the children of God, in a full, free sense, directly and responsibly related with his truth and his spirit, or are we absolutely subject to certain men also, — our mind to their dictation, our conscience to their rule? Such

a question needs only to be stated,—it answers itself.

We have been considering the principle of religious freedom in its relations with the principle of absolute and final authority in Church, or in Bible, or in Jesus Christ. It is evident that the argument applies with equal force to any claim of an absolute authority in any human being or thing whatever. We have specifically considered how the principle of freedom is related with the claims set up by some men for the Church, the Bible, and Christ. We have not considered the Church, the Bible, and Christ, as they are, but as they are sometimes claimed to be. It remains to consider them as they are. For, as I have said, they are realities. In denying the claims set up by some men for them, I have not denied them. I have simply examined the dogmas built on them, and come to them. How, then, is the liberty which I have affirmed related with Bible, Church, and Christ?

The principle of that liberty is that man is the child of God,—his judgment related with the truth, his conscience with the righteousness, his heart with the spirit of God. In the consciousness of his divine birthright, he who holds this faith refuses to surrender his spirit to any human power; but in the oneness of his nature with the nature of his fellow-men, in the recognition of the same spirit in them as in himself, he is drawn to his fellow-men and to all things human. His faith in God reaches

down to man, the child of God, and for the least and lowest of men he has some reverence, divining in him, even against all appearance, some measure of the Father's spirit. This reverence grows as he apprehends the divine in man or in human things. He who holds this faith recognizes the divine birthright at once of himself, and of all mankind. Thus all human things have their meaning to him in proportion to the truth in them.

Let us take the Bible, then. What is the Bible, and what does it contain? What does it represent to us? It represents, first, in the Old Testament, the life of the Hebrew nation from its early beginning to the time of Christ, — not alone the writers and those of whom they wrote, but also those who preserved these books through all these generations. The Hebrew nation, by natural selection, by the common consent of the public conscience and heart, preserved the books of the Old Testament, as that of all their written life most holy, most dear to their hearts, and good for their souls. The Old Testament was not first canonized, and then loved and revered; it was first loved and revered, and then canonized. Next, in the New Testament, are represented to us Jesus Christ and his followers. Though not the writer, Jesus is the chief original of the New Testament, the object which inspired it. Finally, the Bible represents to us the judgment of Christendom, from Christ's time until now; that is, in the early centuries before Mohammed, of

the west of Asia, the north of Africa, and what of Europe was then civilized, — since Mohammed's time, of Europe and her offshoots, and at this present time of Europe and America and their offshoots. By all this part of humanity, the Bible has been judged to contain the holiest recorded inspiration and life known to our race; to be the writing best fitted for the inspiration of the religious life, both the life of the private soul and of the church.

So much of the human spirit is represented to us in our Bible, and if against our sight we apprehend the divine spirit in the sinful and wicked, how much more do we owe reverence to this book, in which is gathered the life and faith and judgment of so many generations. If we believe that we are free by reason of the spirit in us, and that that spirit is not one man's birthright only, but all men's birthright, then by that very faith we ascribe a place to the Bible proportionate to the men whom it represents to us. Thus while we reject the claim of those who ascribe an infallible supremacy to the Bible, we do not reject the Bible itself, but rather establish it in a new and more intimate relation with our life. Recognizing in mankind the spirit whereby we ourselves are free, we reverently regard the fruits of that spirit in the Bible, and in the pious care which has preserved it for us.

So with the church. The church represents to us the larger religious life of Christendom. It

holds the organic religious tradition of our part of humanity. If we believe in the spirit in man, can we disregard the fruit of the spirit in the church? No; however much we may reject the principles of some churches, and some things in the church, we reverence it by that same faith whereby we are free. However wanting we may think it compared with that ideal church, as all things actual are compared with their ideal, yet when we compare it with other human things, as we should compare it, we behold in it a mighty and glorious fruit of the spirit. In establishing our special church upon a free basis, we establish the general church in a new and fruitful relation with our life.

And with regard to Jesus also, to whom of all men the eyes of our Western world have turned since he appeared among us, and who of all men has most held its loyalty and faith, and who now in the general faith of Christendom is either identified with God or stands next to him, as the one whose spirit, of all humanity, has reached nearest to the divine spirit — in rejecting any claim for him in an absolute supremacy over our souls we do not necessarily reject him as the human head of our church,— as being, of all humanity with whom we are consciously associated, the one most filled with the divine spirit. There is nothing in the principle of freedom which I have affirmed inconsistent with faith in Jesus, as standing in our conscience next to God. While we cannot accept his

authority as absolute and overruling, apart from our own persuasion and conviction — for that would deny the gospel which he taught, whereby we are the children of God,— we may yet recognize in him that spirit which we believe to be in man, in fuller measure than in any other known to us. As for myself, I do.

And this applies to all human life and history, as well to heathen as Christian. He who holds this faith will not despise the religion of any human being. The worst idol, as has been said, has represented God to a human soul, and even while we may shudder at some faiths and practices, there yet mingles a certain reverence with our horror, — something of the pathos of human life and of the human heart is present even in the abominations of Moabitish or Feejee idolatry. Thus regarding all the religions of humanity, we do not put them on the same level. We know very well a religion of human sacrifice is not on a level with the religion of love. We know that Christianity is better than the paganisms of Greece, and Rome, and Egypt, and Syria, and the northern nations which it superseded. We know there is hardly such a thing as a level in human life, whether religious or otherwise, and that the notion that one religion is as good as another, however smooth as a dogma, will not fit the facts of history and our own experience. We do not put all religions on a level, but we believe in giving to each its relative position

according to the value of its truth as witnessed by our spirits.

But to return to our special subject. In affirming our freedom we do not make void the Bible or the Church, but we establish them in a new position. We see in them the life of souls kindred with our own; we become one with them in the free union of sympathy. The spirit in us not only frees us from human bondage, but unites us with all men and all human things in which the same spirit dwells. So that the question is not, Shall we hold to or reject the Bible, the Church, and Christ? but, Shall we have them as our absolute masters, quenching our spirits, overruling our minds, crushing our souls without appeal, or shall we have them as fraternal helpers and guides, opening, quickening, inspiring us to a kindred and free life? In affirming the principle of freedom over an absolute authority, we do not annul the religious bond between men; we change it from a bond of despotism and subjection to one of union and co-working helpfulness. The religious principle upon which this freedom rests — namely, that man is the child of God, and hence not subject to human domination,— I find most deeply original in the gospel of Jesus, and as his word I preach it. If there be any one who thinks it original with himself, let him so preach it, and let the fact judge him.

But it is objected that this principle which makes us free, and at the last appeal rests upon the pri-

vate conscience, is a private principle; that it tends to individualism, and to make us look upon every man as the centre of the world, which is evidently error and confusion. There are, indeed, some who boldly proclaim individualism as the equivalent of freedom; but it is not a question of boldness, but of truth. Religious individualism, whatever larger meaning we may foist upon the word, naturally suggests, and indeed emphasizes, the religious separation of men. It centres the world, so to speak, in each man. But are you, after all, we may ask the individualist, the central fact of the world? I am to myself, he may answer. But ought you not to be to yourself what you are in reality, and then if you are so to yourself, do you not deceive yourself? Let us rather be to ourselves what we are in fact, as far as that is possible to us.

It is a natural fear which sees in freedom the exaltation of self, and a natural narrowness by which many professing freedom fall into individualism, and lose their larger life and sympathy; but the fear and the narrowness alike are based upon a misconception,— upon the recognition of only half the principle. That principle is not only that I am free — that taken alone is individualism,— but also the spirit whereby I am free is in all other men, and in all human things; that unites us with all human life.

By what right can he who affirms the spirit in man as the last earthly appeal, and because of its

presence in himself holds himself free from all human domination,— by what right can he disregard the spirit in his fellow-men? by what right can he despise the Bible and the Church, which are its long matured and precious fruits? by what right can he despise the judgment which has brought them down to us?

This is the natural logic of the principle which I have affirmed. He who professes religious freedom, then, proceeds to shut himself up within himself, or within any narrow circle, or within the limits of the present generation, and despises other men and human things, is only half free. Not until he recognizes the spirit in man, present and past as well, and in all human things, books, institutions, arts, traditions,— not until then can he know the full measure of freedom, or receive the full freedom of our city. Enfranchising one enfranchises all,— that is the natural logic of it. Once recognize the spirit whereby we are free in all mankind, and in all that men have done, and thought, and created, and we find our narrowness expanding; we find our souls breathing a larger atmosphere; we find ourselves uniting with our fellow-men in all directions, learning of them, resting in them, becoming one with them in an ever larger fellowship. When we catch this faith, the life of humanity stirs to us with a new movement. The Bible and the Church grow living. Through them the spirit of kindred souls speaks to us, not

with formal commandment and fixed rules, but with the freer voice of example and sympathetic life.

It is likewise objected that, by turning to the principle of freedom, rather than to any form of absolute authority, we give up a professedly infallible and fixed authority, for one confessedly variable, fallible, and imperfect, and this seems a great surrender. And it is very true that he who recognizes the free spirit in man will no longer look for any final and infallible authority in man, or in the church. But though upon the face of it it seems a great surrender to give up all idea of such an authority in the church, yet a little consideration may change our view. Consider a moment,—the church of man is made up of men. Believe it to be divine, as well we may, yet the divine spirit is contained in earthen vessels, in men, its books written, its service rendered, its entire life, at least since Christ's time, confessedly lived by men. Not the Pope himself can deny that. The church, then, consisting of men, what does an infallible supremacy in the church mean? or in any part of the church,—Scriptures, councils, or Pope? What can it mean but the supremacy of one part of the church over the rest? The infallible authority seems a glorious thing in itself, but it cannot reside *in* the church, without being exercised *over* the church. It includes not only the exaltation of one part, but the subjection of the other part. If we set the Bible up on the

divine throne, we do indeed exalt it, but by the same act we subject all men's souls to it. If we set up the bishops or the Pope, in so doing we put down under their feet the rest of the church. Exalt the infallible authority high aloft, and say that in it the church is exalted; but these subject ones, are not they, too, part of the church? is not the church degraded in their degradation?

Look upon this picture of a church in which there is an absolute supremacy claimed, and as far as possible enforced. See this power raised up, and see the rest, the great body of believers, subject to it, stifling their minds, thinking to do God service by denying their own souls, and surrendering their noblest part. That we may see any day around us. Does such a church as that, with one power enthroned above, and all the rest subject at its feet, seem to us more perfect than that church which grows out of the fellowship of free souls held together by common loyalty to the truth?

But in setting aside the claim to infallible authority, we are not delivered up to mere chance direction. Our consciences, though not infallible, are yet responsible; and not merely responsible in an absolute sense, but their responsibility is sanctioned and upheld by all the realities of God's world, and by his laws. If I in my freedom make a mistake, the same pains and inevitable consequences will follow it, as if I believed in an infallible authority. If I sin, my sin will find me out

just the same; the judgment of my life, good and bad, will follow hard behind me, and scourge or bless me just the same. Rejecting all claim to infallible authority, we do not reject the moral law, nor our accountability; nor do we, nor indeed can we, escape its judgment. By affirming that there is a spirit in man whereby he is free from human domination, we do, indeed, annul that law which puts men's commandments in the place of God's truth; but we do not annul or deny the law of God. Rather, we establish it in a more intimate relation with the human heart, as having there its direct hold and power. Affirming the spirit in man, we consciously bind ourselves by the spirit to the law and truth of which our spirits witness. The free church is held together, not by any compulsion of uniformity forced upon it from without, but by the integrity of the conscience in men, drawing them to the truth, and drawing them to a union with each other in the truth. So that the principle of freedom does not do away with the unity of the faith. On the divine side, it looks to that unity of truth which others look to. The truth as it is, one and invariable, the reality of God, the eternal laws which uphold it,—to these we make the same appeal as others do. It is, as I have said, not on the question of the divine unity of the truth, but on the earthly unity representing it that we differ. And on the human side, the unity of freedom is based upon faith in the integrity of the human

spirit; its vital relation with the one truth of God, and upon the oneness of the spirit in all men. It is not invariable. It recognizes the imperfection of man, and all things of man, even the church of man. Its unity is not a thing of the past, essentially accomplished, or with its development confined and ruled within certain limits. It reaches after the unity of divine truth, conscious that it has only partially attained to it, knowing that God's word cannot be bound within any earthly thing, but seeking still its measure of the truth, and knowing that in that it will at least attain to unity. Thus we do not do away with the unity of the faith, however much diversity and struggle may accompany the change in freedom; but we reach after a larger unity than the fixed canon either of Bible or of church. We rest our unity upon the oneness of the truth itself, and the oneness of the human mind vitally related with it. In that faith we wait for the larger unity, which shall be strong enough to bear variations and diversities, that unity to which, through change and struggle, we believe the integrity of our minds will at last bring us.

And here there arises an interesting question for us to consider: How is the private judgment related with the public judgment, the private conscience with the public conscience, the private duty and action with the public duty and action?

This is a much larger question than it at first looks, and includes the relation of our own mind

and conscience, not alone with those of our immediate neighbors, but with the entire world present and past, in any way associated with us.

In any case, it is evident that we shall either agree with the general judgment, or differ from it. If we agree, the case is simple; but if we differ, what principle ought then to guide us? Suppose, for instance, the public round me says, This is so. I look at it, and it seems to me not so. I look again, and in all simplicity of conscience, I see it as before. Here is a conflict. I have a mind and conscience; so have my neighbors. We stand on an even footing there. Furthermore, we are both fallible. I may be right and they wrong, or they right and I wrong.

There are, then, two dangers here. I am liable to think myself right, when I am wrong, — that is, I may be wilful and self-conceited; and I am liable to think them right when they are wrong, — that is, I am liable to surrender my mind to theirs. Which of these dangers is the greater? Your radical partisan answers that question easily. He lays it down, "The dangers of an excessive individualism are much less than those of an undue submission to authority." Your conservative partisan settles it as easily, "The one danger of the present time is this wilful disregard of institutions and established beliefs." But these judgments seem rather to fit the personal taste and sympathy of those who utter them, than to express the full truth of

the matter. The radical partisan does not see that his wilfulness and arbitrariness is the very evil in himself which he so hates in others. If a church tries arbitrarily to impose its word on me, it is tyranny. If one man tries arbitrarily to impose his word on me, is not the motive the same, and the effect the same, as far as it goes? The Roman Catholic Church says, "Believe as I say, or be banned here, and suffer hereafter." The arbitrary man says, "Believe as I say, or you are a fool." Is there not a family likeness here? Is the motive any less arbitrary, because the form it takes is personal and not ecclesiastical? Multiply our arbitrary man by some millions, put power into his grasp, let the same temper guide him, and have we not something very like the ecclesiastical tyranny which above all things he hates? But it is not the size, but the quality, of our action which determines its character. An arbitrary man is of the same piece as all other tyrannies. He is a younger brother of the Pope, whatever name he may be called by, however large or small his party. This subtile spirit of tyranny needs nothing larger than a human heart to dwell in. He is as much at home under the cap of liberty as under the crown or the tiara, and can speak all languages, and wear all colors, and assume all styles. He can inspire to selfishness alike the rich and the poor, the learned and ignorant, the weak and powerful; alike the priest and him who hates the priest; alike the vast

organized church and the little churches, and the sect of yesterday, be it orthodox or heterodox. He can creep into them all and possess them. He lurks at the door of all our hearts, and laughs as he enters where the door is left unguarded, in the security that we are surely free. We think we are fighting battles for freedom, and attacking ecclesiasticism, and working hard against all forms of tyranny; and lo! the enemy which we have thought possessed only churches and governments, and large and public bodies, glides subtly into our souls, and we know it not; and we too are among the tyrants; we have caught their spirit. I cannot hold the dangers of an excessive individualism to be comparatively slight, for I see that arbitrariness in one man is the same thing as in a vast institution, — that it is an injury to his own soul, and to all around him, for it is a disease that is catching.

Neither can I agree with our conservative partisan, that the great need of the times is unconditional conformity to established ideas and institutions, for that would give us peace at the expense of character. What would it profit us if we should gain perfect quiet and uniformity, an undisturbed discipline and organization, a public life in Church and State without a stir or ripple on its surface, if in so doing we should lose the manhood which is the public soul? What would it profit us to have an outward order, if we had no men and women of free minds, of original and achieving energy, eager

for truth, filled with generous and lofty purposes? Such are only bred by freedom. In the long run, too, this submissiveness of character would be the opposite of safe. If we should succeed in taming the public to perfect smoothness, we should in so doing lay the seeds of a worse trouble than we had cured. This weak, submissive temper would either bring the decline of the public spirit, or would prepare the way for a reaction as uncontrolled and wild as the submissiveness had been unreasoning and tame.

In case of a conflict, then, between my conviction and the public conviction, what principles should guide me? I may be right or the public may be right. The presumption of numbers is on the public side. And history shows us multitudes of dissents from the public judgment where the dissenters were mistaken. Our own experience tells us that we have often thought ourselves wiser than the world, and a little study or experience has reversed our judgment. History shows us multitudes of men dreaming that they are great poets, or painters, or musicians, and men who have conceived universal reforms, and the setting of all things upon new foundations, and the establishment of new religions, but who have not had the stuff to do it with, and so have failed. Human life is pathetic with such mistakes as these.

And, on the other hand, there are plenty of instances in history, and in our own experience,

where one simple, straightforward conscience, even of a young, unlearned, inexperienced person, has been right, against the voice of age, and the judgment of the wise and prudent.

I may be right, or the public may be right; how shall we decide? We must appeal to the truth itself, about which we differ, to test our judgment. The ground of all faith is the reality which is the object of faith; in proportion as that reality is perceived and grasped, will our faith in it be strong and firm. My personal faith and the public faith rest upon the one reality which is the object of it. In case of conflict, then, we must test our conviction by the reality, and by the reality I do not mean merely the abstract truth of the matter, but the reality in any of its forms, either the inward essential truth, or the fruit of it, the practical tendency of it. How does this idea work? How does it affect the character? How society? Will it bring decline or progress? Thus, in all manner of ways, we must test the question between any public conviction and our own, if we differ from it. This consideration will cure us of many self-deceptions. Inquiry justifies what is true, but works the opposite effect with what is false. But if the conflict still remain, and inquiry confirm it, what then? How stands the balance between our private judgment and the public judgment? At first glance, our private judgment shows very small; it is one man against a multitude. If numbers

rule, we must surrender. But if the one man, as sometimes happens, has the truth, how stands it then? Remember Frederic Douglas' words, "One with God is a majority." One man with the truth outweighs the world without it. He holds a position against which numbers have no meaning.

In case of such a conflict, then, which test and inquiry does not remove, but confirm, we must stand by our private conviction, not in self-conceit, but in simple loyalty to the truth and to our own souls. Consider, too, what is the origin of the public judgment. Evidently it is the combined private judgments of many men. If no man had a mind or judgment of his own, there would be no public judgment. In appealing to our private judgment against the public judgment, we are appealing to the original, — against that which is derived from it. We are going back to the source of the public judgment. And we must stand by our conviction, because, whether mistaken or not, it is our own, and we are responsible for it. We cannot delegate our responsibility to any agent. The commandment is Thou, not thy Church, or thy Bible, or thy Party, but Thou.

And after we have done our best, we may yet be mistaken. We must remember our liability to error, and we must take the responsibility of possible error. Yet if we keep our minds open to discern the effect of our belief, we may, if in error soon perceive it, and right it. And if our eye were

single and our conviction faithful, our motive not the exalting of ourselves, but the prevailing of the truth, even finding ourselves wrong, after all, may have its consolation, and we may magnanimously rejoice, or at least with our humiliation mingle something of rejoicing, that the truth has prevailed even over us.

In this faith that we are the children of God, and our consciences and minds directly related with his truth, there is unbounded inspiration and hope. Every faith has its inspiration after its own kind, according to the nature of its object and the intensity with which that object is grasped. If, then, we shut the soul within a human authority and hedge it round with biblical or ecclesiastical limits, we take away the inspiration of the soul's life in the same proportion. If the earthly authority which we set up be coextensive with the universal truth, then indeed there would be no limitation of faith or loss of inspiration; but if the authority we set up be less, then there must follow this loss of faith. By as much as the authority is less than the truth, by so much is the life inspired by it less. This is not a mere danger and apprehension; the injury is actual and open to our observation. Observe the life of the Roman Catholic Church, and of other hard-shell churches. In certain directions, when their rule permits it, there is a highly developed life, perhaps surpassing what we find elsewhere. But on those sides where the despotism

presses, see the stifling of the soul, the persistent, zealous, fanatical, and cruel injury and maiming of our nature; see the encroaching tyranny, overmastering one part after another, and crushing out its life! Not only is the object of the soul's faith lessened, when we set up a human authority in place of God's truth, but the soul itself grows smaller, grows used to subjection, until at last it becomes, we may say, naturally subject, and loses even the thought of its free manhood. And when that happens to a person, or people, or church, there is an end of worthy life, of original thought and action, an end of living prophecy and prayer, until some soul, growing among hidden ways to strength, bursts the bonds, and wakes the world again to the free consciousness of manhood.

When any human authority exalts itself above the human conscience, it forgets the origin of all just human authority. When any church, or religious society of men, exalts itself above the conscience, it forgets that it is itself the offspring of that conscience, and that in quenching it it is quenching the sources of its own life. When the church of man shall humble herself to the simple truth, and recognize her human origin, and her human conditions, and her human duty, and, seeking not her own glory, but the truth of God and the good of man, shall abase herself to the level of man, we shall see a new church.

We have been considering the nature and condi-

tions of Christian liberty, and some of the relations growing out of it. I have based it on the Christian faith that man is the child of God, and directly related with his truth. We have seen that all claims to an infallible supremacy over the human conscience in any book, or institution, or person, are only various forms of human despotism, the setting of a portion of mankind over the rest, thereby denying to the rest their divine birthright. We have seen, too, that while this principle of freedom is in deadly conflict with any such despotic claims, it is not antagonistic, but, on the contrary, sympathetic, with the gathered life of religious institutions, and with the public religious life; that this gospel faith unites as well as frees us, — unites us with the life of all kindred souls, and unites us with all institutions, books, and persons, with a power proportionate to their truth. I have spoken of the narrowness of those who interpret this freedom only on its individual side; of the unity which this faith gives, larger and deeper based in the human heart, than any despotic unity can be; of its recognizing the whole body of believers as integral parts of the church, and enfranchising all instead of exalting a part over the rest.

I have considered the relations of our private judgment with the general judgment, the danger of arbitrarily exalting ourselves, and the danger of surrendering our souls, and finally I have pointed to the inspiration and promise of this faith.

In affirming this liberty against any absolute, earthly authority, we do not break the tie which unites us with mankind. We change it from an outward domination to an inward fellowship. Neither do we give up our divine allegiance; rather, we establish it more deeply, resting it in the inner spirit. We establish it upon the new covenant, the law written upon the tables of our hearts.

Jesus bids us, as the summit of our aspiration, be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect; and he who carries in his heart the holy consciousness of God's spirit within him, while it will humble him to see himself in the light of such a faith, will yet meekly dare to follow this exalted hope, and will seek to grow into the divine fulness, — toward the full measure of divine grace.

In this faith we stand, free by the spirit in us, one with our fellow-men in the union of the spirit, receiving from them help and strength in proportion to the truth which we recognize in them, and yielding them our reverence and faith for the truth with which they bless us, looking with them to the common source and end of all our life.

And round this holy gospel I see forming a renewed church, — free, enlightened, powerful. I see it gathering all the human faculties to its service, putting off its swaddling-bands and its confused entanglements, and waking to the consciousness of its strength, casting its young, prophetic glance over the round world. I see it in the future,

rising in its mighty youth, overcoming one form of error after another — meek, gracious, and irresistible, — winning nations to itself, and regenerating humanity. I see this holy gospel enduring through the ages until its work is accomplished, and the sons of men, filled with its inspiration, become indeed the sons of God, blameless and without rebuke.

PRAYER.

"They looked unto him, and were lightened." — PSALMS XXXIV., 5.

The unseen power which enfolds our life, which giveth us our breath and taketh it away again, is always present with us; yet we are most distinctly conscious of its presence in the times of crisis, when some great sorrow, or joy, or overpowering experience comes to us. At such times we are, as it were, brought face to face with the divine power, and we recognize its nearness to us. The divine mystery enters into our life; something comes to us which we had not prepared, nor thought of; or our knowledge, and skill, and foresight are overmastered, and our life, as it were, taken out of our hands, and mysteriously ordered. But this unseen power, though at such times more distinctly felt by our minds, is always with us. In that supreme presence we continually abide, and the right disposition of our hearts in that supreme presence it is one of the great aims of religion to attain.

In the world of mystery into which our deepest experience brings us, we are beyond exact observation, beyond sight, in the midst of unseen realities, among which we must move by that within us which finds its native home in this unseen world, by those powers of the soul which are still with us when our sight fails us, the hope, the faith, the love which may abide with us and uphold us as long as our souls themselves abide. And to sustain us in this saving faith, to uphold us against the doubt and despair to which our natures are prone, and keep in us the healthful strength of the spirit, we need the help of prayer.

"They looked unto him, and were lightened," says the Psalmist. Prayer is the looking unto him. It is the conscious recognition of the unseen power as responsive to our spirits, so that even in the world of mystery we are not alone. But even this power which enfolds us, which orders our lot by its supreme will, is related with us, is with us, and his heavens are not a blank, nor a wall echoing our voices, but the abiding place of one who can hear and answer us. By our faith we rest upon the deepest human experience — love, righteousness, and truth, — as upon realities. We look upon these things, not as freaks of nature, or the glimmer on life's surface, but as realities, substantial and enduring, significant of the world which we do not see, and of the divine being. By the revelation in human hearts of love, of truth, of right,

our faith is so illumined that its light penetrates into the divine mystery; and in the unseen world we apprehend a reality corresponding to that deepest experience of our life; and in the Divine Being, though his fulness be beyond our thought and speech, we apprehend a nature responsive to what is best in us. There are some who quarrel with the expression, "The personal God," as if it implied a limitation of God's nature, or seemed to conform him to our human nature; and doubtless the expression is sometimes so misconceived; but I know no better expression than that, to signify our faith that the Divine Being is responsive to what is best in us, to our personal nature; not that he is a being of simply human powers enlarged — far from us the thought, — but that in him our highest human nature finds its meaning; that he is responsive to what is best in us, — our love, our truth, our grace, our inspiration. By this faith our hearts are not only upheld amid the mysteries of life, but they are uplifted; there is a constant power leading us to better things, holding out to us new and higher possibilities.

In that faith that the divine being is responsive to our inward, personal life lies the spirit of prayer, and by prayer and meditation the health of our souls is maintained. Prayer is the exercise and action of that faith, and by it the faith itself is kept alive and strengthened.

That is a suggestive thought which I remember

to have quoted here from Renan: "Perhaps it is well that an eternal veil should cover truths which have their reward only when they are the fruit of a pure heart." The things which are plain and palpable call for palpable and easy virtues; the things which are obscure and hidden call for the finer and more inward virtues. Immediate and visible ends are reached by short-lived motives and expedient action, — the far-off ends, invisible to sight, and only apprehended by prophetic faith, call for a deeper inspiration, a holier patience, a devoted faith. If the realities of Providence were not mysteries, but plain to our sight, and subject to our calculation; if salvation could be bought for a specific price, either of certain acts, or labors, or sacrifices; or if the kingdom of heaven could be reached by any visible and unmistakable path, — then its attainment would seem to call for nothing higher in us than a kind of worldly prudence. And how many there are deluded by the thought that they can circumvent God, and by selfishness and fear can attain the divine blessing. But the fact that the divine realities are mysteries, and that we cannot reach them by the lower methods of selfish calculation, and exact observation and inference, this very fact tends to develop in us new powers with which to meet and reach these mysteries. And these powers in us which deal not with palpable facts, but with the unseen and impalpable truth in which our souls live, these powers of the

spirit which reach out to the supreme mysteries, and which meet our religious need, are the finest graces of our life; hope, faith, aspiration, peace of heart, the love of God, the apprehensiveness of the divine truth, — these are the inward graces, by whose possession the soul dwells at home even in the midst of the infinite mystery, and experiences a blessing which even the certainty of any lesser joy cannot bring to it.

But from this state of peace, and hope, and faith, the heart is prone to sink; prone to be overcome by cares, and labors, and perplexities, and sins, and we need the help of prayer and meditation to keep up the healthful spirit in us. As to the forms of prayer, they must vary with our characters. It is here, I think, as it is with the forms of social and domestic life. It is well to have good forms, which express our meaning, and which have in them a power of development, so that the forms themselves lead us up and improve us; but the forms must vary according to our characters. We like our friends to have good manners, but we wish sincerity from them first of all, without which all forms are hollow. So in our divine relations, singleness of heart and simple sincerity of expression alone are fit. Not that I would severely condemn those who in their worship use a language or form apparently insincere, unless they be conscious of it; for, however single our hearts, our thought and speech is often obscure from the mystery of

our subject, and the symbol which we use to express our meaning sometimes comes to have a different meaning to us from its apparent meaning. I recognize the great difficulty here, and would not harshly condemn any forms of prayer as necessarily insincere; for in no such easy way as that can we detect insincerity, which may lurk in what seems the most natural and simple expression; but I would especially commend those whose forms of prayer are the natural expression of their character and faith. If we can pray naturally and simply, then is our prayer an organic part of us, helping the growth of our souls, and itself helped by that growth.

And as to the spiritual conditions of prayer, though I have said that the spirit of prayer seems to me to lie in the faith that the divine being is responsive to what is best in us, yet I would draw no such limit as final, nor say that no one can pray who has not this faith. I think this faith necessary for the deepest prayer, but who shall say where true prayer begins? Wherever there is the uplifting of the heart, or the fixing of the mind upon high things, there is the beginning of prayer. There are many among us, in these days of positive fact and positive philosophy, who have not a conscious faith in God as a personal being responsive to our hearts, who have little faith in religion or in the religious institutions, but who yet recognize in themselves and in the world the higher and the

lower, the better and the worse. Can they pray? And if so, what is their natural form of prayer? They certainly can do that which is a kind of praying; they can stay their minds upon what is best in their experience, and in the experience of the world; they can meditate upon what of truth, and beauty, and righteousness, and love, they have known and witnessed, and deepen its impression upon their hearts; they can habituate themselves to these high and elevating thoughts, and every day recall them to their hearts, and dwell in their familiar neighborhood. This fruitful and sanctifying meditation is open to those who have no conscious faith save in certain human excellences. There are some people, and those often of high and pure character, who question very much whether they have any right to pray, whether they have faith enough to pray; and we may rightly ask ourselves whether we ought to pray in certain ways; but it seems to me that every one who is not utterly sceptical of man and God, any one who recognizes any beauty, or truth, or grace, in the world, can so far pray as to stay his mind upon that truth or grace, and habituate himself to it, and by daily meditation in it draw in its healthful air, and strengthen his soul with it. Meditation, silent dwelling on the truth, is a thing but little prized in these restless days; but by that meditation the truth penetrates the heart with its vitality and health.

And then there are those who hardly have a conscious faith in God as the Father of our spirits, nor in the great objects of the world's hope, but who yet love this faith in others, who are drawn to the religious institutions, who are drawn to the church which gathers and associates the faith and aspiration of the world. Or they may be drawn toward some man who has a greater faith than theirs. It is said of Abraham, "He is a prophet; he shall pray for thee." And the disciples asked of Jesus to teach them how to pray. Those who pray as others have taught them, because they have not themselves the clearness of thought, or the elevation of heart to pray in their own way, are wise as well as humble. By the help of their brethren they are supported, and inspired to good thoughts and actions. And even if we be ourselves capable of original prayer and worship, yet there are better than we are; there have lived those who can guide us in our prayer. Of all our brethren of the human race we must here seek help, and learn from holy men how to dispose our hearts and thoughts toward God; and as far as we are able to receive their truth, it will enter into us and inspire our prayer. And there is this advantage in using the prayers of holier men than we are,—that by using them we grow up to their meaning. We may not wholly understand these prayers at first, nor at last, even; but if they be real, and we use them rightly, then their meaning will more and

more unfold itself to us, so that the prayer itself will more and more teach us how to pray. And there is this other great advantage in using prayers sacred from the holiness of their author, and consecrated by the usage of our fellow-men; that by the prayer itself we are associated with these our brethren; that we approach the Father's presence in the society of our brethren, and are sustained by their faith. Our religious faith unites us not alone with God, but with man, and our prayer is not full unless it associate us with our race, and bind us up in community of purpose and faith with the church of God, and with mankind.

To pray most fruitfully we need both the personal form of prayer, — the simple expression of our own desire, and need, and penitence, and aspiration, — and the more perfect forms in which the holiest men have expressed their hearts, and which the conscience of mankind has consecrated.

Stated seasons of prayer, and set forms of prayer, are liable to degenerate into formality. Yet if we have no habit of prayer, we are likely not to pray at all; for we have habits in other things, and these habits grow upon us; and if we do not have the habit of prayer and meditation, we shall probably find that our other habits will crowd out our prayer and meditation. Experience shows us that in civilized life habits are natural and almost necessary. We habituate ourselves to regular meals, although we are not always hungry just at those times. If

we want to learn anything, we must put some will as well as inclination into our study, and form some habit of study; so if we seek after righteousness, and the will of God, experience shows us the wisdom of habituating ourselves to meditation and devotion. We are more responsible for our habits than for our original natures; for our habits are more the fruit of our own will and act. We should then guard against the exclusive influence of our other habits, and of the necessities and cares of life, by forming some habit of meditation or devotion in which we may at least consider our duty and our course of life, and recall our highest ideal, and in which if our faith go further we may seek the help of God, and the support of the Church to strengthen us.

We have these two dangers: on the one hand of neglecting our devotion entirely, if we form no habit of devotion; and on the other, of becoming formal in our worship, if we have the habit of devotion. But I think the danger of neglect greater, at least among us, than the danger of formalism. Yet the danger of formalism is great; and if we are wise we shall not make our habit a fixed and set form, but rather an elastic habit, which can fit our varying states of mind; so that we may sometimes meditate in silence upon our duty and the truth, and sometimes use the forms of prayer which the Saviour, or the Church, or holy men have given us, and sometimes pray out of our own

minds and with our own words. Thus we may regard the conditions of our human nature, and not strain our faith by a mechanical conformity, nor yet neglect to give it its daily nourishment.

But the form and manner of our prayer is secondary. However we may reach it, so only we fix our heart upon the best things in our experience, or upon the supreme objects of our faith, we shall then truly and fruitfully pray. We live in the midst of mystery; our lot and life are in the hands of the unseen, eternal Being, from whom our life has come. By dwelling in faith upon the divine mystery, there enter into our hearts those graces of hope and peace and aspiration and abiding love which keep us firm even in the midst of the mystery; and our faith may lift our hearts to the apprehension of the Divine Being, who is not alone the universal Power, but the heavenly Father, in whom our hearts find their meaning and their eternal peace; the Being who is responsive to what is best in us, in whose keeping nothing of our life is lost, but its preciousness guarded and increased. Looking unto him, we are lightened.

WORLDLY AND UNWORLDLY WISDOM.

"For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." — LUKE XVI., 8.

Such words as these help us to fill out our knowledge of Christ's character, and to deepen our understanding of his gospel. It is sometimes thought that Jesus believed and preached his gospel out of his inexperience, and that his gospel is good religion for inexperienced people, but that it will not bear the rub of the world; that it is a good Sunday religion, but that somehow it neglects the actual conditions of life, does not recognize the difficulties of life, — in fact, does not work very well in the world.

But there is much in the gospels which corrects this view of Christianity, and which shows to us that far from having the shallowness of inexperience, it has in it the depth and strength of experience. The gospel of Jesus, the good tidings of the heavenly Father and the heavenly kingdom, are not simply the bright thoughts of a fresh, pure

heart ignorant of evil. They have in them, indeed, the morning brightness of the pure and stainless soul; but they are yet tempered in the dark waters of experience. It is not only toward the end of Christ's life, when the ignorance and malice of men began to close around him, and to threaten him and his work; it is not only then that Jesus shows his understanding of the temporal conditions of righteousness, and of the obstacles which his word must meet; but in the very beginning and throughout the record of his life there is the deep undertone of experience. The sense of inward need, the mourning of the spirit, meekness, hunger and thirst for righteousness, mercy, pureness, peace of heart, blessed are these, says Jesus; and following these comes the blessing upon those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, and after that again the blessing upon those who are reviled and spoken against for Christ's sake. That he knew would be sure to come. And when he tells them to love their fellow-men, he does not forget that part of our fellow-men whom it is hard to love, — our enemies, those who curse us and hate us and despitefully use us and persecute us. His gospel is no easy optimism, calling upon us to be meek and pure and peaceful, lovers of righteousness, because it is easy to be so; but to be so although it be hard, although it bring persecution and distress and loss. He does not tell us to love our fellow-men because they are so good to us and kind to us,

for many of them are not thus; we are to love them in spite of their being evil to us, of their hating, injuring, slandering, cursing us; not because it is easy, because it is godlike to love them. What a depth of heart which would see and feel the iniquity around him, and yet love those unjust ones who hated him!

And when Christ, in his parable of the sower, tells us of the effect of his word upon men's hearts, how true it is to human experience. His word he knows is not going to reform everybody immediately. It will fall by the wayside, — on the mind dark with ignorance or sin, which will not understand it, and the wicked one will catch it away; it will fall in stony places,— on the shallow heart which has no root, and dureth for a while; which catches at the beauty and blessing of the word, but when persecution ariseth, or any trouble comes from loving the gospel, it is offended, it cannot understand those last beatitudes, nor see any blessedness in persecution or trouble; it will fall among thorns,— upon hearts filled with worldly cares, and anxieties about their property and fortune, and anxious both for to-morrow and to-day, careless only about their own souls and their highest good; and only when the word has fallen in these unfruitful places will it fall in the good ground, into receptive hearts where it will take root and find freedom and sunshine, and be fruitful in all the graces and powers of the Christian character. So clearly did Jesus

see the real state of human hearts, — their weakness and their indifference.

And when, turning from the effect of his word upon the private personal heart, he speaks of its larger effect upon society, there is the same clear knowledge of the temporal conditions of his truth. This glad news of the kingdom, which is to be heaven upon earth, — this gospel of peace, he sees contains the seed of discord and revolution. There is war in it. The bitterest divisions will grow out of it. Even the sweet harmony of home will be broken up by it, and the closest and most intimate relations will suffer from it; "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." So it must be with every new truth. Happy if the whole household learn it together; for where one part receives it, and the other not, there must be lack of sympathy, and it may be estrangement and bitter division.

And so examples might be multiplied of the depth of tone, throughout the words of Jesus, without which his words would lose much of their saving power; for how could his gospel save from sin, if it did not recognize the fact of sin?

And again, in the words to which I ask your thoughts to-day, we see an example of Jesus' wisdom and clearness of sight. "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Worldliness is, for the time being, surer of worldly success than unworldliness is. They who from worldly motives seek worldly ends

have their reward in worldly success. Just as the hypocrites — the men who act religion for the applause of men — have their reward in the applause of men, and gain fame and admiration and sweet praise for their prayers and charity; so the worldly-wise have their reward and gain success in proportion to their skill and prudence. And just as the man whose prayer and alms are only before men, and not to God, just as he can only receive the applause of men for his reward, because his motive is limited to that, and his heart only opened to receive that, and not turned to God to receive the divine reward and blessing, — so is the worldly-wise man successful only "in his generation"; his success is limited by the lowness of his motive and the shortness of his aim. He wants immediate success, and he works for it. He is prudent and careful in seeking it, and the success comes and endures for a while.

The man who devotes himself entirely to worldly ends is more apt to succeed in his immediate purposes than the man who mixes higher motives with his lower ends; for the moment he adds these higher motives, and tries not only to effect his immediate object, but to keep true to some principle of honesty, or human kindness, or public spirit, or piety, he makes his undertaking much larger and more difficult and more full of risks. I do not mean to say that even worldly success does not require certain principles. Worldly success has its

laws. A certain amount of honesty and uprightness is essential to it, and certain virtues of character and mind are essential to it; but I say it is a much simpler work for a man to aim merely at a certain worldly object, and reach it, conforming to the rule of right enough to save his respectability; it is much easier for him to reach his object thus, than if he try also to fulfil a high purpose, or act upon larger motives than those of his self-interest. And that seems to be one of the meanings of these words: that the children of this world — worldly people without any thought or purpose beyond present things — get on more smoothly in the world, make fewer mistakes, conform more carefully to circumstances and temporal conditions, and in general conduct themselves and their affairs more wisely, after their fashion, than the "children of light," who have the vision of higher things, who have heavenly desires, and who seek unworldly ends. It simplifies a man's life very much to have him desire nothing but some immediate object, and to care nothing how he attain it. But in proportion as we add to this simple ambition higher desires and aspirations, our success grows the more difficult, and its attainment the more distant, and our religious desires connect us with such infinite objects, that their perfect attainment is impossible upon the earth. And since our religious desires and aims are complicated with earthly and human conditions, and our life includes all our temporal

needs, as well as the objects of our faith, the farther our religious desires reach the more danger will there be of failure somewhere. To live so that we shall be faithful alike in the little things and in the great things, will call for more and more wisdom upon our part.

And then the unworldly things are so beautiful in themselves, and the love of them so natural and satisfying, that those who have that love are apt to think that is enough, and not to feel the need of wisdom. To love "not wisely but too well" is one of the special faults of religious and enthusiastic people. Hard facts take out something from the sweetness of their feeling, make them uncomfortable; they are suspicious of criticism and quiet judgment. The ends we aim at in religion are so fair in themselves that we are apt to forget the means by which they must be reached. Thus we have the desire of personal goodness, the hunger and thirst for righteousness, and that desire is itself so good and high and worthy, and gives us such a consciousness of the soul within us, that we are apt to forget that this end is one of the most difficult of all things to attain; we are apt to forget the discipline through which we must attain to righteousness; and the words of a teacher speaking out of the moral experience of the race, and telling the discipline of virtue and the means to righteousness, fall coldly and heavily upon our aspiration. Yet this wisdom is needed, if we would endure in our

endeavor. The very aspiration itself will grow weak and faint unless it be fed on truth, and deal with reality.

Or we have a desire to benefit our fellow-men. We are warmed, perhaps, with the charitable desire that everybody should be fed and clad and comfortable; and in that very desire there is something so generous, that the desire itself seems to be sufficient. We are apt to forget that this is an end most difficult to reach, and the means to that end requires the greatest wisdom. The end itself is so fair and generous that we are impatient of the means; we are impatient of anybody who questions or discusses; for questioning the means suggests questioning the end.

And it is the same with many of our higher desires, that the objects of our faith and desire are so good in themselves that they seem to justify themselves, and their simple presence in our hearts to be enough, while in reality they are ends which must be reached by means, by wisdom and knowledge and judgment and faithfulness and patience; they are ends most difficult to attain, in which we are liable to mistake and failure; in which we may oppose and defeat, by our own folly, the very end we aim at.

Thus those who love the light, and seek the higher things, need to learn the lesson of wisdom from those who are wise in worldly things; for by as much as the things they desire are greater than

the worldly things, by so much do they need greater wisdom.

And let us not be too quick to count ourselves children of light, because we have not the success which some others have. We sometimes fail because we are too good to succeed, — because success would be unworthy, and our souls will not stoop to it; but we often fail because we are not good enough, — because we lack wisdom, or virtue, or strength enough for success. That is a very dangerous habit of pride which consoles itself with failure by thinking success to be beneath it. If we lose because we are true to our principles, to our love and faith, then, indeed, we have the high consolation of the faithful heart, uplifted though cast down, rejoicing in God and in his truth, whatever fortune may bring him. But it is not the failure itself which brings this, but the faithfulness inside the failure; and it is not every failure which has this consolation. Yet if the faithfulness be there, there is this consolation.

The ends we aim at in religion are high, and to reach them we must conform to the reality, and by wisdom and faithfulness gradually move to their attainment; and this attainment is difficult in proportion to the greatness of the ends, and we are sure to err sometimes in seeking it, and may make many mistakes, and never seem much nearer to success than when we started, and the disappointment of our own hearts will find a mocking echo

in many a cold, or careless, or envious spirit round us; yet is that word true which Paul gives us, and which is responsive to the promises of Christ, that "all things work together for good to those who love God." To the faithful heart there can come no final loss. Disappointment, failure, mistake may befall the faithful man; but still he has this joy within himself, the sunshine from above, the divine light shining in his heart. If we keep steadfast to high objects, and hold fast our faith, and if we endeavor purely to fulfil it, there is in the very quality of our soul and action something which will endure through all. If then we err, we shall blame our lack of wisdom and seek to remedy it; but if we were faithful to our little light, and dared to seek our object in obscurity, we shall not be without the deep reward which God gives to every faithful motion of our hearts, the peace of God, the comfort of the Spirit, which no outward righteousness can buy, which no price can buy, but which is the divine reward of faithfulness. Through our failure and success, through our gain and loss, or praise and blame, or glory and disgrace, the great objects of the world's hope and aspiration, the truth toward which they reach, remain; and if we can but stay our hearts on that, we shall have the consolation which comes from it. Let us then learn the lesson of those who are wise in the things of this world, yet not be content with their wisdom. Let us do our best to add wisdom to our

faith, and seek the true means to our high ends; yet let us so love the higher truth as to prefer failure in seeking it to success without it.

"Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick return of profit, sure
Bad is our bargain!
Was it not great? Did not he throw on God
(He loves the burthen),
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen? . . .
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it!
This high man with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it! . . .
That has the world here — should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This throws himself on God, and unperplext,
Seeking, shall find him. . . .
Lofty designs must close in like effects,
Loftily lying,
Leave him — still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying."

FAITH IN GOD.

"I am not alone, because the Father is with me." — JOHN XVI., 32.

Jesus is "a prophet of the soul." The deep things of the soul, which in most of us lie obscure and silent, he utters; and as he utters them we recognize them as ours also. What in us is faintly felt, a vague longing, a dim, uncertain thought, a wavering hope, he utters with clear consciousness and full conviction, and the power of his faith warms ours into life, and gives it strength and firmness. Often he speaks as with the voice of human nature itself, as though in him mankind itself were speaking, not its current thoughts and wishes, but its deepest desires and aspirations. Thus is he our helper, his higher nature acting everywhere upon human hearts, and everywhere developing our inward powers, strengthening our minds to clearness, and our hearts to faith. Thus is he the prophet of our souls, divining our own hearts for us, showing us ourselves, interpreting our most hidden nature,

and inspiring us with his own deep and universal faith.

And this utterance which I quote to-day has in it this universal quality, a meaning for every human heart: "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." In this we see expressed the abiding faith of Jesus, that the Father was always with him, and with this faith he sought to inspire those around him. In this faith he met all the experience of life, — the common every-day cares and necessities, the temptations of selfish ambition, the disappointments of life, the misunderstanding of kindred and friends, the hardness of men's hearts, the malice and hatred of his enemies, and death itself. And through that life, through all its outward change, there shines this fulness of faith in the near presence and the constant love of the Father. And if in the agony of the cross, the despairing cry of the psalmist, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" rose to his lips, it was but the parting cry of his mortal nature. And it may be that these words were not his, but that, rising to men's minds as they thought of his death, they became associated with him, and attributed to him. But whether or not he, too, had times of wavering, and passing moments of despair, the abiding life of his heart had in it the full consciousness of the Father's presence with him. And in that faith he viewed alike the great and the little things of life; and to that faith he called all those around him, to

sustain them also in their little cares, and in their sharper trials. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus looks over our human life, and considers our experience, our common needs of daily bread and clothing, and the temptations to worldly care which grow out of these needs, and the temptation to be content with a narrow, shallow, and formal righteousness; abstaining, indeed, from murder, adultery, perjury, extreme revenge, and unnatural malice, yet indulging in hatred, lust, careless and profane speech, hardness, and ill-will; and he considers the temptations to hypocrisy, and again the danger and the likelihood of opposition and persecution. He looks over our life, and, warning us of its dangers, he tells us how to meet them, and gives us the remedy for them. And this he does, we may say, by shedding the presence of the Father into our whole life. When, for instance, he warns us not to be anxious about our food and raiment, he says, "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Not that we should not seek them; for we must seek them; we have need of them; but he who made the need has provided for its satisfaction also. Trust, then, to the Father, that your labor and prayer for daily bread will, by his Providence, supply them. And when he tells us to rise above the common practice of men, and love even our enemies, he says, "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:" and in other places he thus appeals

directly to God's presence with us as a motive to us. And the Sermon on the Mount is pervaded by this consciousness of the Father's presence with us; and so are the other words of Jesus. And observe he does not simply say *my* Father; it is, "*your* heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need," and so on; that "ye may be the children of *your* Father," and so on. The near help and presence of God is general to all who will receive it; the gospel of his love is sent to all of us.

We are not alone, because the Father is with us. The power by which we came into this outward world, by which we live our mortal life, by which at last we leave it, is a real power related with us,— related with our inmost selves, inspiring us, guiding us, loving us, present with us alike when we enter this world, and while we remain in it, and when we leave it. And by faith in this present power we feel that we are not alone; we are inspired to goodness and patience and devotion; we are sustained under trial, and comforted in affliction, and upheld in sickness and peril. By this faith we join our partial life with the eternal life. Where our life touches the unseen, it does not find a blank, but it finds the unseen power. This faith connects us and our mortal weakness and changeableness with the mighty God, the eternal providence; it binds our destiny to him.

This faith Jesus had in full and abundant measure. It was in him an abiding inspiration and con-

solation. It gave to his nature and his words and actions that divine quality by which he is an enduring and universal blessing to mankind; and this faith is the deepest inspiration and the deepest comfort that our hearts know. In our life it inspires us to truth and steadfastness and unselfishness and patience and courage and joy and hope and peace, — to all the good fruits of the Spirit. And in the presence of death it is still with us; it teaches us that God is present still with those who pass from the earth, and that in him they live.

That we are in the hands of an almighty Power, against which our wilfulness cannot avail, which marks out our mortal life and ends it, whether we will or no, is too plain an experience for any one to deny; but what that power is, is the great question which holds our minds, as it has held the minds of all the world since first the world awoke to conscious thought. What is that power which presides over our birth and death, and over all our life, however much in exulting health and prosperity we may forget it? What is that power? We may call it chance; but that is only the expression of perplexity. Chance is no key to the secret of the world; it rather expresses the perplexed confusion of our minds, and our doubt of there being any key. We may think it the orderly movement of unconscious force, here and there developing into consciousness, — conscious in man (for no one can deny that man is a conscious being); but as a whole

unconscious; that is to say, our human consciousness has no divine counterpart. The universal being is, indeed, active, and out of its ceaseless activity man is produced, and develops to intelligence and love and holiness; but when he turns to the power whence he springs, there is no intelligence there, no consciousness, no love, no holiness. Man turns to his eternal source, and there, according to this view, he finds no counterpart to that which makes him man; no divine counterpart to his intelligence, his love, his holiness. I waive the question here which some raise, whether it be strictly right to apply human terms — intelligence, love, holiness, — to the divine and ineffable Being. The terms are incidental. The question is, Is there in the universal being the divine counterpart of the highest part of man? Is there in the unseen power the counterpart of that which is seen and manifest in the best men and women in the world? Is there in God the counterpart of that which is manifest in Jesus Christ? If we conceive the unseen power to be unconscious force, even if orderly in its action, we still leave human life as much an enigma as ever; we interpret the divine by the lower side of nature. If God be unconscious ordered force, then what is man? However much this view of the divine Being may obtain credit with those exclusively interested in physical phenomena, or in an age when physical phenomena are specially studied, I cannot feel its force as philosophy any

more than I can recognize its adequacy as religion. If the world were a great unconscious mass, dissolving and combining and recombining and whirling and circling in endless, yet orderly, motion, and then the thought were uttered, — an unconscious orderly force, — I should see the fitness between the thought and the thing. But in our human world, with this human history behind us, and our human life around us and in us, to say the universal power is an unconscious orderly force, does not fit the fact, — does not unlock the secret of the world. It leaves man and human life out of the question. And it is just that, it is just man and human life which *is* the question, — the heart of the question. But when the thought comes to us, that in the divine Being, in the unseen power which presides over our birth and death, and in whose hands is all our life; in the unseen power there is the divine counterpart of human life also, as well as of the life of outward nature; in the unseen power there is that which, in a divine and unimaginable way, corresponds to what is highest in our human nature; nor is there any height which man can reach of truth, or holiness, or love, but in unspeakable perfection abides in the divine nature, — then we speak the name of God, and our hearts bow down in worship. Then, if one may speak of such a mystery, we seem to have found the secret of our human life. The highest part of man, toward which all nature painfully develops, becomes full of mean-

ing to us. We interpret the divine Being, not by the lower forms of existence, but by the highest life we know. And while there remain many mysteries and perplexities, yet this faith in God as having in himself, in unspeakable perfection, the counterpart and fulfilment of what is best in us, as related with us, not only in the ruling of our destiny, but in our inward life,—this belief in God seems to me both the word that best unlocks the secret of our life and the faith that best inspires and consoles us.

Thus thinking, the life of the world becomes to us no longer meaningless; the life of the human soul is no longer isolated. Every heart feels the central bond. Into human life there comes the uniting power, binding us all to God and one another. The prayer and effort, the love, the hope, the faith of human souls, are not in vain. They have their fulfilment in the united life,—in the life with God and with his children which our faith promises.

We are not alone, because the Father is with us. Such is the faith of Jesus, and that faith is the deepest inspiration and the deepest comfort that our hearts know. By it we unite our life with the life of the Father; we unite the life of all our brethren with his. And as he is deeper and higher than life, or death, or anything created, we have in him an abiding refuge and an abiding hope. And we believe that those who pass from us are still with him, and are safe with him.

And this faith enters our hearts by its own power, and by our sympathy with those who hold it. And it grows strong within us by our dwelling upon its truth, and by our practising upon it, and experiencing its power, and by our seeing it present in the hearts of others, inspiring and comforting them. The faith of those around us, of those in distant places or times; the faith of the whole holy Church of God, of the universal company, who in every age and all places have turned to him for strength and comfort; the faith of the Saviour,— all may strengthen and support us. We are not alone, because the brethren, too, are with us, and the Father with us all.

And may God grant to all of us this faith of Jesus, and the strength and comfort and peace which spring from it. May he grant that this faith may gradually grow up within us, and that by continuance in it we may know its blessing.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.

"Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

THE BIBLE.

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." — ROMANS XV., 4.

By the help of books we may become almost literally "citizens of the world." We may carry in our minds the experience of whole nations and races, and dispose our minds and guide our actions by the life of men far off from us, of different race and speech and customs; and the extent to which we literally do this few of us realize. It seems like poetry, and imaginative, to speak of such influences. But it is the commonest matter of fact, even in the lives of the most practical men, to be directly influenced by some ancient Hebrew or Greek, or some other far-off man. By reading, then, we bring the distant world near to us. The ancient and the foreign nations become our teachers. We learn not only from our own minds and the minds of our parents, but the minds of the world speak to us. How to use the gathered wisdom of the nations and the ages is a great ques-

tion for us. And it is an immediate practical question for all teachers, and for all institutions concerned with teaching.

The point on which this question touches us most nearly is about the Hebrew and early Christian Scriptures, — the Old and New Testaments. How to look upon these writings in the truest way; how to be most vitally and fruitfully related with them, so that they will help us most, is a question contantly presenting itself. It seems to me that our public are to a great extent out of natural connection with the Bible; and that the relation of many minds with the Bible is an artificial one, and less fruitful than it would be if it were natural and real. To remedy this we need a truer view of the Bible, so that we may not be hindered from appreciating it by our perplexity about it. Only in this way, it seems to me, can the Bible take its rightful place in our hearts and minds. And so it seems to me it is our duty, not only to *admit* the criticism of the Bible, which seems to us to be true, but to *teach* it and extend it.

A large part at least of our public seem to me, as I have just said, out of natural connection with the Bible, — not knowing what to think of it; and in consequence of this perplexity either using it artificially, or else using it very little. The contents of the Bible are so ingrained into our New England life, — into our literature, speech, manners, and traditions, that the results of laying the

Bible on the shelf are not immediately perceptible. Thousands of us may entirely give up the reading of the Bible without any very perceptible public result; because our general life is so pervaded with the contents of the Bible, our public thought has so much of the Bible in it, that we should receive a good deal of it indirectly, even if we should leave off reading it ourselves. Just as thousands of people, who keep apart from the church, share all the public benefits of the church, though they share none of its burdens, but live to that extent upon their neighbors. But if the disuse of the Bible spread, so as to become general, the result will be in the highest degree disastrous, and a great spiritual help will be lost to us. There are, no doubt, many reasons for the decrease of Bible-reading among us, — one, no doubt, the increase of other reading. The great expansion of reading — I do not say of literature, but of reading — which this generation has witnessed, the enormous increase and spread of books, has very much affected our reading customs, and affected them in a variety of ways. One of the effects has been to diminish the reading of the Bible. Our fathers, we are told, read their Bibles more than we. But they had comparatively little else to read, — so that it was as much their circumstances as their virtue which caused them to read it so much more. Now, every child has quantities of books offered him to read, — books at home and in his neighbors' homes, — books

in the Sunday-school library, and in all other sorts of libraries, and many magazines and newspapers. Along with his Bible there is placed before him a great quantity and great variety of other books. And just as at tables where, along with the wholesome food, there are regularly spread all sorts of dainties, nearly all children, and perhaps most grown people, will take too many of the dainties, and in course of time lose their wholesome appetite and diminish their health; so it seems to me the present careless and greedy reading, by old and young, of all sorts of books and journals, many of them with no merit but their newness, seems to have seriously injured the intellectual vigor of multitudes among us. On the whole, the benefit of this increase of reading may outweigh the evils. But the benefits would be greatly increased if the public used more self-control and wisdom in its reading. At any rate, people now-a-days have much more choice of reading than they used to have, and this affects their reading of the Bible, and has diminished it.

And, no doubt, there are many other reasons why the Bible is less read among us than it used to be. All our life hangs together; all sorts of influences affect it. The general course and movement of men's minds affects all their specific actions. And to explain why it is that the Bible stands in its present relation to our minds, would be to explain the whole life of our age.

But this fact seems plain, that many minds among us are much perplexed about the Bible. And this perplexity hinders our using it. Some of us hardly know what to make of it, even if we read it out of regard to pious custom, or because we think its reading a religious exercise and discipline. Some who hardly know what to make of it, do, indeed, continue reading it thus, and gather wisdom from it, in spite of their perplexity. For whatever there may be obscure in the Bible, there is plenty of it that is plain and helpful, whatever theory we hold about it, or whether we hold no theory at all. But others who are perplexed about it give up reading it. They feel that they do not take a very genuine interest in it. There is much in it they do not understand at all, much that troubles them, some things which shock and disturb them. Reading it rather raises a multitude of questions to their minds, than gives them comfort and support. So they give up reading it.

The remedy for this evil seems to lie in seeking the reality about the Bible; in learning what it really is in itself, and how it is naturally related with us. If we learn what the Bible really is, and come into our natural and true relation with it, many perplexities and obscurities will still remain,—for much in the Bible is necessarily obscure from its antiquity and strangeness; but our method will be right, and we shall be in the way of receiving freely and without hindrance its teaching and

help. Whereas, if our general view of the Bible be artificial, and our relation with it not natural or real, then, in addition to all the inherent obscurities of the Bible, our method with regard to it will be wrong, and its teaching for us will be warped and twisted.

It seems to me that the natural and true way of regarding the books of the Bible, both of the Old and New Testaments, is to look at them in their place in history, as expressing the life, thought, and faith of those who wrote them. And we should read them as we read other books, chiefly for their contents, — with regard for the opinions of others respecting them, but chiefly for their contents. These books have been canonized not only by the Roman Catholic Church, but by the Protestant Church also; and they are canonized in the hearts of Christendom. And this canonization is with many actual idolatry, — the setting up of a book, a human thing, in the place of God. Observe how this happens. First a man, Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or Paul, writes a book. Its depth and power interest its readers. They prize it, and tell others of it. The book is multiplied, and becomes a public treasure. Where people meet for religious purposes, the book is read as the best word for their souls. In synagogue, or church, it is read for the power of its contents. The ecclesiastical organization grows. At last a body of ecclesiastical officers meets; and, considering what is good for the socie-

ties under their charge, and for the world, they pass the dogma or resolution that such and such books are sacred,—or, it may be, that they are the absolute word of God. Then the next generation brought up on this dogma read the books differently,—not freely, as they would read the words of a living preacher, but always with this dogma that they are infallible in their minds. This goes on more and more, and the relation of men's minds with these canonized books grows more and more strained and artificial. The former order is reversed. Originally the book was loved and revered, and then canonized because it was loved and revered. But later generations find the book already canonized, and they are called upon to reverence it because it is canonized. And here comes a very interesting question. When has the book most power? When it is read chiefly because it is loved, and because people are interested in it, and find it good for them to read it, or when it is read largely because it is canonized, as a pious custom and discipline? That is a very interesting question, because many people assume that to read the books of the Bible, as we would the works of living men, is to take away a great deal of their influence. And it does vastly lower their apparent place, instead of saying these books are the infallible utterance of the divine Spirit, to say these books are the writings of certain Hebrews, which the experience of the Western World has found to be of all

books most helpful in religion. What a vast apparent descent from the infallible word of God to the writings of certain men, even if they have been found best suited of all books to the religious needs of half the world! But is the difference as great as it appears? Does the real power of a book increase in proportion as it becomes canonized and outwardly revered? On this question that other question bears, — whether Isaiah's or Paul's writings had more power when they were living, and the writings read naturally and freely as the writings of living men, or later when they were regarded as the infallible oracles of God? Of course they had a wider power later than at first, because it took time for them simply to spread; and later they were known to more men than at first. But, aside from the number of those whom they reached, was the power of these books less, at first when they were freely read as the works of living men, than afterwards when they were read as canonized and infallible books? I think not. Were the New Testament writings less powerful over men's hearts in those first days, when they took their chance with other books, and held men's hearts by their contents, and had not been consecrated by council, or canonized as sacred, — were the gospels and epistles less powerful in those first days, when they were freely read, than afterwards when councils had declared them sacred, and finally deified them? I think not. Then, in those first free days they

moved the world by their own native power, — they needed no formal consecration. But that consecration came. The books were collected, stamped with ecclesiastical sanction, one wrapper of dogma after another was added; the simple words of the evangelists and apostles were clothed more and more with ecclesiastical notions, until at last they resembled in men's eyes their original character as little as the Pope of Rome resembled Peter.

Whatever title or outward authority men give to the books, they remain the same. That is, whether I think Paul's epistles the infallible word of God, or the utterance of a certain Jew, the writings themselves remain the same. And it is by no means true that I can increase their power by increasing their name and title. To think a book infallible when it is not so is a positive injury both to the book and to myself; and on a large scale this error works disastrous effects. It hinders men from understanding what the book contains, and what the author means, and so of feeling his influence. The way to feel the influence of a book is to view it as it is. The way to make its influence felt is to teach the true view of it. To think a book infallible when it is not so is to bind a fiction to it, to which we must continually bend its real meaning, — is to put our mind in such a position that it cannot easily receive its meaning. To call a book infallible when it is not so is to hinder other people's receiving it. While, therefore, there

is no doubt that the doctrine of infallibility gives an apparently greater authority to the books of the Bible, it is certainly very doubtful whether it gives them any more real influence, because before the books were canonized they seem to have wrought their most powerful effects. And there is no doubt that a mistaken or artificial view of a book hinders our receiving its meaning or right effect. And those views which remove the Bible, or the writers of it from human conditions seem to me artificial.

As I have said before, a book is a human thing, and any inspiration there is in it must be in the man first; and while we believe men to be inspired, we believe them to be inspired under human conditions. In order to read the books of the Bible naturally, it seems to me we must read them like other books. We must remember that their authors were men like ourselves, and read them simply as we read other books, — not so much anxious to make the contents fit our notions as to find out what the author means. When we read a book with preconceived notions about it, we are cramped in our appreciation of it; only when we read it freely, with the desire to catch the author's meaning, — to feel the movement and power of his genius, his thought, his faith, — only then can we fairly receive the author's influence. Many people, I find, are much more anxious about their view of the Bible than about the Bible itself. But the Bible will remain what it is whatever view we take of it; only

if we take a wrong view we shall not receive its real message, because our eyes will be blinded to it. We should try, as much as possible, to form our view of the Bible on the Bible itself,—read it freely, just as we read other books, so that its real character will impress itself upon us, and then consider what it is; not first make up our minds what it is, and then always try to make it fit our preconception.

There is no doubt that the change of view with regard to the Bible will work a change in the use of it, nor is it easy to say what that change will be. By the method which seems to me the true one of treating the Bible, the Bible will be brought into more natural connection with our minds, and its contents will work their natural effect unhindered by artificial conceptions. Holding this view, we associate with the Biblical writers on the same free terms with which we associate with other writers and other men. We ask them what their word and message is, and receive its influence and force. That this is a great change from the views of the majority of Christendom is evident; that it will affect the use of the Bible in the public mind and in public worship, and in the private mind and worship, is evident; but how is not so evident. Nor is it at all evident that it will lessen the influence of the Bible. It may increase it. In many cases under my own observation it has increased it; but what will be the large and general effect it is hard to say.

There is one objection, however, which many people feel and express,—to read the Bible like any other book is to degrade it. If the Bible isn't different from other books, why use it in church, and for other religious purposes? But because I read the Bible like other books, as giving me the thought and life of a certain nation and its great teachers, because I read it thus freely, I do not put it on a level with other books. The notion that other books except the Bible are on a level is a great mistake. Books vary by their contents from each other, and the Bible varies by its contents from other books; and the different books of the Bible vary by their contents from each other. To read the Bible freely as we do other books will not make the Bible like other books, nor shall we use it as we do other books, because its contents are different, and its meaning different, and consequently its natural use is different. Just as originally the books of the Bible found their natural place in men's minds, and came to be used in public worship, and were afterwards canonized, so now the free reading of the Bible will give it its natural place among other books, and in the private and the public mind and use. The power of the Bible rests ultimately upon the nature of its contents, the depth to which it moves our nature, its fitness for enlightening and elevating and sustaining the heart. Its position as the sacred Scriptures did not give it this power; but this power in

it gave it its position. The free and natural treatment of the Bible opens its meaning and its power, and opens our minds to receive it. A friend of mine said to me not long ago, "Last summer I discovered the Psalms." He had heard them read all his life, and had often read them himself; but one day when he was on a vacation, as he read them leisurely, not for discipline, nor for any practical purpose, but as we read other books—for interest, and to know their contents,—as he read thus leisurely, with an unincumbered mind, what he had indeed often read before, the power and mighty breath which fill them took possession of him as though they were a new word to him, and he had new-discovered them. So will the Bible freely read be a discovery to many who have hitherto read it only in a constrained way. So on a large scale it may be a new discovery to Christendom, and inspire the Christian world with a new impulse and life.

HOPE.

"Rejoicing in hope."—ROMANS XII., 12.

That is a beautiful conception in the book of Genesis which interprets the rainbow as a token of divine promise, God setting his bow in the heavens that we might have hope in him and in his goodness. Nor does the interpretation fail with time. The rainbow still blooms in the sky, and still rejoices our eyes, and cheers the devout heart with hope in him who is the author of such beauty. After the fearful beauty of the storm, the wind, the thunder, and the blazing lightning, comes the gentle, radiant beauty of the bow athwart the clouds. The war of the elements closes in peace, and the heart of the beholder changes from awe and suspense to quiet cheerfulness and pleasure. Children of Nature, we feel her influences. The things of Nature affect us after their kind. They awaken in us thoughts and emotions corresponding to themselves. But, once awakened, these thoughts and emotions in us go beyond the objects which awak-

ened them. They become part of our souls, part of our enduring life. The "skyey influences" pass into our very nature, and there become humanized and a part of our character. The hope which the beauty and the bounty of the world awakens and nurtures in us is not confined to the circumstances which awaken it, but abides in us among all circumstances, — becomes part of our life itself.

It is one of the distinctive marks of the Christian faith that it has hope in it. Christianity, we say, grew upon the stock of Israel; and it not only grew, but bloomed there. "The law was given by Moses; but *grace* and truth came by Jesus Christ." And that indefinable grace which was in Christ, and which is in the Christian faith, is not only the "beauty of holiness," and the power of faith, but it has in it also the freshness and the joy of hope. The gospels and epistles beam with fresh and hopeful life.

It is a common thing to hear hope spoken of as an illusion, — part of the over-health of youth; pardonable, indeed, in that season of our life, but hardly to be reckoned among the mature and stronger virtues. There is, indeed, a beauty about this disposition which naturally distinguishes it from homelier virtues, and places it among the graces of character. And yet we err if we think its grace is a mark of weakness. Experience does indeed bear heavy upon our hopefulness. Disappointments, checks, limitations, failures, all the sad

experience of life, weigh upon our hopefulness, and yet none the less clearly does experience teach us the need of hope, — the strength and power of hope. Thus, on the one hand, experience lays burdens on our hope; and on the other, experience develops our hope, raises it, fixes it, confirms it.

That our experience weighs upon our hopefulness we know, perhaps, too well. Take any person starting upon an enterprise, and even though he be well on in life, yet if the object before him be to him fresh and untried, it will impart its freshness to him. Take any enterprise, outward or inward, the attainment of some outward end, or the attainment of righteousness, there is a freshness and vividness in the first sight of the object, as it stands before us in its own attractiveness, which fills the heart with hope and cheer. Take a man, for instance, morally awakened to a full consciousness of his own soul, — when it comes over him that he himself is a reality, and that in his own character there lies a mighty work to be performed, or to be neglected, or perverted. The sight of some good man or woman, the thought of some departed saint, the thought of the holy Jesus, it may be, awakens him to himself. The thought comes over him, "I, too, may be a good man; I, too, may join the company of the good, — the children of truth and of uprightness, who uphold and bless mankind and glorify their Father." And he pictures himself a good man. His hope springs with one bound to

that end, and he rejoices as though he were already of the kingdom of heaven. But inquire of him later, and we shall find a more chastened and humbled mind in him. It may be, perhaps, that we shall find he has lost his hope. The sudden springing up of his hope lacked root, and withered as suddenly as it had grown. Or it may be we shall find a faint and occasional glimmer of it left; or it may be, as I have said, that we shall find it still strong and enduring, but chastened and humbled. And all alike would tell us that when they resolved to be good men, and live good lives, and attain to a worthy character, they little knew how hard it was to be good, and how continual a succession of difficulties their resolve would have to meet. One hard reality after another had opposed itself to their hope, and experience had weighed heavy upon it. And it is the same with all our hopes.

And yet while experience burdens our hopefulness, it yet demonstrates the need of hopefulness. The poor man who hoped to be among the good, but whom one temptation after another has assailed and overcome, until at last he accepts his weakness as final, and no longer struggles against sin, when at last his hope fails him loses a great power. The only way he can be saved, as far as we can see, is by starting that hope again within him. Without that motion of his own soul toward honesty and uprightness, we may help him outwardly, or we may forcibly restrain him from crime, but we can-

not reform him. But if we can once wake in him the hope of goodness, there is some chance for him, and he may struggle forward to a worthy character. And it seems to me that Jesus had and has, in a wonderful degree, this mysterious power of awakening hope in the hearts of the weak and sinful. The grace of his nature touches the cold and hardened soul to life and hope. And in the awakened hope lies the possibility of good. Without hope the soul lies inert and motionless.

And the experience of the uncertainty of life demonstrates the need of hope. We live in a world of which we are able to see and know a part distinctly, but in which there is much more that we cannot know. Especially with regard to the future is all our life uncertain. We cannot possibly foresee what our future is to be, — whether sickness or health, life or death, poverty or riches, prosperity or misfortune, and all around us are in the like case. There is no constancy in the circumstances of our lot. But he who has in himself a hopeful disposition is so far guarded against the inconstancy of circumstances. When a man is disappointed in any hope, we are disposed to condemn his hopefulness; but it is his lack of wisdom which we should condemn, if his hope were foolish. It is his fate which we should condemn if he were disappointed in spite of prudence. Hopefulness cannot make a man wise. And an unwise man will be foolishly hopeful, as he will be foolish in

every other way. But his hopefulness is his virtue; it is his foolishness which is in fault. The man of hopeful disposition has in his hopefulness a positive strength with which to meet circumstances. It is easy to strike a man when he is down, and the despondent man is always down, and every misfortune strikes him with full force. But the hopeful man is always up, and his hope must first be overcome before misfortune can fairly strike him. His hope is a positive resistance to evil, whose power cannot be measured. The only force which we have with which to meet the necessities of life and overcome its evils and fulfil its purposes, is the force of our own souls, strengthened by knowledge, and by the unseen power. Hope is a part of this inward strength. By it we are at home in the midst of uncertainty. By it our life is guided and upheld. It is the light forerunner of faith; and where all around is dim and clouded, and the heart left only to its own direction and its own life, hope buoys it up.

The conditions of uncertainty are constant in our life and in every part of it; and so hopefulness is a strength which we all constantly need; for the heart is a power in itself, and where all else is uncertain, the disposition of the heart gives guidance and direction to our life. Our hopefulness gives us just so much more power in the midst of uncertainty. And he who lacks this strength of hope is at the mercy, not only of every evil, but of every chance of evil and fear of evil.

Thus there is need of hopefulness in proportion to the uncertainty of our life; but that same uncertainty makes it difficult for us to keep up our hope. Just as there is need of health in proportion to the strain upon our strength; but that same strain makes the preservation of health difficult. Yet it helps us to remember that hopefulness is health and strength, not weakness as some are tempted to think.

And the need of this spirit of hopefulness is nowhere greater than in our religious life. In our religious life we are surrounded with mystery. Our observation shows us a part of the reality, a part we infer from what we know; and beyond our observation and our exact thought there opens to us the mysterious world,—invisible, unimaginable, unspeakable; yet that world, though invisible, is related with us. We touch its hither side, though we cannot reach it with our observation, nor bind it with necessary logic; and as we stand upon its shore, we are not wholly strangers to it. The unseen mysteries awaken in us certain dispositions of the soul, thoughts, and emotions, whose presence sustains us in the midst of the mysteries which awaken them. These religious thoughts and dispositions long dwelling in us reach a certain steadiness which we call our faith. Habitual dwelling on the unseen world, on the inward life and need of the soul, association with holy teachers, sympathy with other minds, form in us a certain framework of thoughts

and dispositions by which we interpret the unseen realities, and live before God. But there are times when this framework of our faith is rudely shaken; when some part of it which we had thought strong seems to give way, and confusion and perplexity shake our minds. At such times there is nothing left for us but hope, until our minds recover from their perplexity. In the midst of confusion and doubt of mind, we stay our souls upon the hope that what is good in our thought of the unseen world is also true and real. However difficult it may be for us to unite our knowledge with our faith, however far apart the facts of our observation and the objects of our faith may be, and however weak the framework of thought which we once trusted may at such times seem to us, yet even at such times we may still hold the hope in the unseen realities apart from all proof, evidence, argument, or probability, or any process of reasoning; we may still hold the hope that God and immortality and the eternal right are realities, because they are good. And I would give more for the simple, unsupported hope of some souls, than I would for the most assured and fortified confidence of others. And while it is only at critical times, and comparatively rare occasions, that our minds are thus thrown into utter confusion, yet a certain amount of confusion and perplexity is one of the constant conditions of our inward life. As I have said of other parts of our life, so of this part also; some

uncertainty is one of its constant conditions, and this uncertainty we must meet with hopefulness. So that that character which lacks this disposition of hopefulness is weak upon a constantly exposed side of life. The uncertainties of life, its dangers and apprehensions, strike full upon it; but the hopeful man has in his disposition a defence against these uncertainties, nor do they reach him until they become certainties. And when with hopefulness there is joined prudence and thoughtfulness, we have a double strength. I have known persons of this steadfast character whom men trusted for their wisdom, and loved for their hopefulness; who stood as pillars of strength for all their friends to hold to, bravely upright amid all the change of circumstances, and amid all inward difficulties and perplexities. The power of a hopeful character cannot be measured, nor its influence calculated. We touch there upon the vital essence of the soul, the springing life within us, whose possibility no one can foresee or limit.

And in our hopefulness lies the promise of achievement. No great thing was ever done without some hope to start it. There is much in our life that we do because we must, — we cannot help it; but that part of our life which we love, our actions large or small which we rejoice in, — these have hope in them, and to this part of our life our hope gives grace as well as movement. The philosopher Philo says, "The beginning of all participation in

good things is hope;" and in another place, "Nature has placed hope at the gates to be a sort of door-keeper to the royal virtues within, which no one may approach who has not previously paid homage to hope. Therefore the law-givers and the laws in every State on earth labor with great diligence to fill the souls of free men with good hopes; but he who, without recommendation, and without being enjoined to be so, is, nevertheless, hopeful, has acquired this virtue by an unwritten, self-taught law, which nature has implanted in him." The children of hope are the children of promise also, and we look always with fresh interest on him who still keeps his hopefulness, as though we still expected something from him, for we see in him the living springs of power. But if that hopefulness fails or passes away, our expectancy passes with it.

The children of hope are prophets of future achievement. Far beyond the range of calculation and deliberate prudence, their hope discerns its object, and they move toward it, opening the way for the rest to follow.

"Hope evermore and believe, O man, for e'en as thy thought is
So *are the things* that thou seest, e'en as thy hope and belief.
Cowardly art thou and timid? they rise to provoke thee against them.
Hast thou courage? enough, see them exulting to yield.

Yea, the rough rock, the dull earth, the wild sea's furying waters,
(Violent say'st thou and hard, mighty thou think'st to destroy),
All with ineffable longing are waiting their Invader,
All with one varying voice call to him, Come and subdue;
Still for their Conqueror call, and but for the joy of being conquered,
(Rapture they will not forego,) dare to resist and rebel;
Still when resisting and raging, in soft undervoice, say unto him,
Fear not, retire not, O man; hope evermore and believe.
Go from the east to the west, as the sun and the stars direct thee;
Go with the girdle of man, go and encompass the earth,
Not for the gain of the gold, for the getting, the hoarding, the having,
But for the joy of the deed, but for the Duty to do;
Go with the spiritual life, the higher volition and action,
With the great girdle of God, go to encompass the earth.

"Go: say not in thy heart, And what then were it accomplished,
Were the wild impulse allayed, what were the use or the good?
Go: when the impulse is stilled, and when the deed is accomplished,
What thou hast done, and shalt do, shall be declared to thee then.
Go with the sun and the stars, and yet evermore in thy spirit
Say to thyself, It is good; yet is there better than it.
This that I see is not all, and this that I do is but little;
Nevertheless it is good, though there is better than it."