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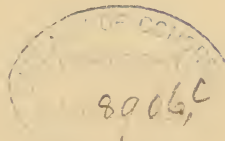
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# SERMONS

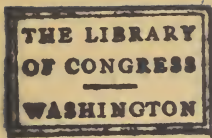


BY

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table*  
REV. C. D. N. CAMPBELL, D. D.



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# SERMONS.



## I.

### DIVINE HUSBANDRY.

“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” — PSALM xcvii. 11.

THESE words appear to be the vehicles of a vast weight of solemn and instructive thought. The eyes of the Seer seem to sweep, in the text, over an infinite range of being, duty, and destiny. First, an unlimited field is spread out before him ; then, the garnerers of an immortal seed are opened to his inspection ; next, the sower goes forth to sow ; and last of all, the tremendous harvest is reaped and possessed.

The field comprises all the events of subordinate and created existence. These are necessary, fortuitous, or contingent. Necessary events are those between which there subsists a known infallible connection of causes and effects. In the material universe, such are the relations of the planetary system, and its effects upon our seasons ; the law of gravitation, which draws all ponderous bodies toward a common centre of attraction ; the laws of light, with all the effects of reflection and refraction.

tion ; the laws of heat, its action in radiation and its effects in expansion, contraction, and combustion ; and what is now known as the science of acoustics, by which vocal effects and the atmospheric vibrations produced by all sonorous bodies, may be directed, governed, and economized. In all these things, given the cause, and we know that an infallible connection binds to it a consequent effect.

The social world is still more fruitful in illustrations. In business, capacity, integrity, industry, and economy have a known infallible connection with success. The dullest as well as the most gifted understands the law, and uses these qualities with all confidence and with more or less of efficiency, as reliable factors in the product of his own pecuniary support or splendid fortune. So, all professions, arts, and industries have their rules of success and failure ; which rules are simply the expression of known infallible connections between cause and effect. Such also are the operation, in the social world, of many kindred and congenial sympathies, prejudices, passions, antipathies, and even enmities. Every one understands that it is in his option to adopt such a course of conduct as shall arm the whole community against him ; or, on the other hand, he may as freely pursue such a course as shall win him many friends, or even render him universally popular.

Such again are the laws of organic life, as displayed in the physical functions of humanity. The rules of hygiene, the operations of disease and

violence, the effects of medicines, physical pains, and sensual pleasures, constitute a class of events, between which and their causes there subsists, as every one understands, a known infallible connection.

And the same is true, to a limited extent, in the world of mind. The æsthetic and emotional susceptibilities of our common nature are the capital of the artist and the orator. By their appeals to our natural love of the sublime, the beautiful, and the pathetic, they touch and wake — according to the measure of their artist power — all the thrilling tones of feeling. We laugh, we weep, or we are rapt in an ecstasy of admiration, because these sons of genius know how to move us as they will. The intellect, like a fruitful soil, nurses and develops infallibly all the germs of thought sown there by the wild wind of Chance, or the hand of patient Culture. Even the godlike Conscience and the fierce, unfettered Will may yet blind and manacle themselves. Between evil, and its effects in depravity — if once received into the soul and made welcome, — there is a known infallible connection.

These all are necessary events, in a strict and philosophical sense, and comprise the first part of that vast field over which the eye of the Prophet Psalmist seems to glance in the text.

The second great class of events are those which we term fortuitous or accidental. This class comprises all those events between which there subsists an equally infallible, but unknown, connection of cause and effect. Such, for example, in the mate-

rial world, are the fall of meteoric bodies, the deadly or destructive strokes of lightning, hurricanes upon the sea and tornadoes on the shore, earthquakes and avalanches, the fall of trees and edifices, tidal waves, fires, mechanical and chemical explosions, as some of those from steam, gunpowder, nitro-glycerine, and illuminating oils. In these cases, the connection between cause and effect is certain, but unknown, in the sense of unforeseen; inasmuch as we never think of the cause till we witness the effect; or the cause is first published to us by the presence of the effect.

The social world may furnish us again with a thousand illustrations of the power of accident or chance. In business, great gains and disastrous losses, and not unfrequently ultimate success or failure, are the effects of unforeseen causes. Some wild and sentient Energy — despite our skill and providence, as despite our negligence and incapacity — seems to seize, all at once, the helm of our affairs, and indicate the harbor of success, or dash us upon the rocks of failure. Under the operation of the same occult law, professional Merit shall lie long unnoticed and forgotten until it despairs of the prizes which it has fairly earned; while Mediocrity or Unworth shall win and wear the rewards of Power and Virtue. Governments are aggrandized or overthrown, and dynasties perpetuated or destroyed by the same means. Some of our rarest and dearest personal friendships, and our deadliest enmities, even, are the effects of unexpected and inexplicable causes.

So — exceptionally, it is true, but still occasionally and really — health and sickness, infection, contagion, violence, and death, or un hoped for preservation and safety, come to us through the mysterious door of Chance.

The same weird Influence often makes wild work with our sensibilities, quenches the kindling flames of resentment and affection, or fans both to a deadly and consuming intensity. The intellect, I believe, of most men owes more to chance than to voluntary culture. Like a shrub among shifting rocks, shaken ever and anon by volcanic forces, it is warped, and pressed and prejudiced and prepossessed, until it loses all the symmetry and beauty which are the product of natural and regular laws. Even the domain of the moral sense — the purely spiritual faculties — is invaded and subjugated, not unfrequently, by this strange Force. How many spiritual natures work out their own salvation, in accordance with God's revealed laws, and aided by the celestial forces within them, — compared with the number of souls that float as neutral material, idly down the stream of years, the sport of every eddy, and soiled by every foul thing which is drifted by the current of Chance within their reach, — it would be hard, it would be impossible to say.

These fortuitous events — including all those between which there subsists an infallible but unknown connection of cause and effect — comprise another portion of that vast field of circumstance which the prophet seems to contemplate in the text.

The remaining and final division of this field embraces all contingent events. These are known by the absence from among them of any real or settled connection of cause and effect. On these, we are to observe that mind is the only real agent or power in the universe. Even those dynamic forces, in the mechanical world, which we term powers, are so called only in a tropical and never in an accurate or philosophic sense. Now all those events which are the actions or motions of the Supreme Mind, are of course purely contingent; because perfect independency and freedom are of the essence of the Deity. Every one understands that the pure, unmixed, spiritual, and infinite Mind, which we term God, is the source of all power, in the form, or substance and manifestations, of subordinate minds. Every one understands, also, that the Supreme Mind is the natural controller and regulator of those subordinate minds, or powers, which He creates or puts in motion; and that all this control and regulation — being, in effect, the action of the infinite Mind — is purely contingent. Subordinate minds are simply limited agencies, communicated powers, miniature likenesses of the infinite Mind.

We understand of the angels and of the devils, that they are superhuman, intelligent, and spiritual beings. Each has individuality, a limited independency, separate and self-governed powers, peculiar and personal designs, and a sphere of free and untrammelled action. Now all these motions of superhuman minds, being free, are consequently purely contingent.



We understand, again, that human beings are of a mixed nature — partly animal and partly spiritual; that the animal part is subject to decay and death, while the spiritual part is immortal, individual, personal, independent, free, and responsible, — in short, in the image and likeness of God; that this spiritual and divine part of man is the natural sovereign of his physical and material nature, and dominates it, always, with an absolute-ness proportioned to its self-assertion, or the voluntary exercise of its native force; that it is lord of the intellect, and endues it with riches or abandons it to poverty and neglect; that all the wild forces of passion are subject to its sway, and submit, however reluctantly, to its enforced restraints; and finally, that it is lord of itself, the conservator of its own forces, or their wasteful and suicidal destroyer.

Thus all the motions of mind — supreme, superhuman, or human — are free, original, and uncaused; and are in consequence properly and purely contingent; and these constitute the final portion of that vast field of events, in which “light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”

The seed appropriated to this field is, apparently, of two distinct kinds: “light and gladness.” But light, in the text, is evidently but a symbol of truth. Now truth, in man, is the relation of sameness between things and his notion of them; or it is the relation of sameness between his own notions, or thoughts, and his affirmations. The

former is the matter of Divine revelation, in all its forms ; the latter is of the very essence of the character of the righteous ; and has had, certainly, since the world began, but one perfect representation in humanity ; and that was in the person and character of the man, Jesus. The matter of revelation, or the relation of sameness between things and our notion of them, is sown, as seed, in the wide field of all events. In other terms, God condescends to correct our natural misapprehensions, by representations of the truth as it really is. Thus are formed correct apprehensions of God, nature, and man ; sound judgments of Providence and Redemption, and right opinions concerning knowledge, wisdom, and power. In a word, the universe, as it is, is revealed ; but the revelation is in the form of seed, or germ-life, to be deposited in the field of events, there to quicken, expand, grow, and multiply until the harvest time.

Gladness is simply the sentiment of complacency in exercise ; it is the substratum of all satisfaction : it is the earliest and most pervasive form of the feeling of pleasure. Under the stimuli of fortunate circumstances, gladness naturally rises into pleasure. Gladness is the easy effect of the harmony of all our powers. We are glad, sitting alone, at home ; but the unexpected presence of a dear friend, or the clear perception of a difficult truth, or the manifestation of Divine approbation, produces each its separate phase of pleasure. The first we term pathematic, the second intellectual, and the last spiritual.

This feeling of pleasure prolonged, becomes, in its turn, happiness ; as in the case of the continued presence of dear friends, the progressive motion of the mind in the apprehension of a long series of abstruse truths, or continuous Divine communications.

From happiness, again, under more powerful stimuli, we rise to joy ; and joy prolonged becomes bliss. The transient ebullition changes to a sweet repose. The bubbles of joy, instead of bursting and disappearing, unite to form a radiant and beautiful hemisphere of enduring bliss.

From bliss, once more, under still more powerful stimuli, we rise to rapture. The soul is uplifted, as by an angel's wing, and dares, for a moment, the infinite of gladness. And this rapture, prolonged, becomes finally ecstasy ; the very heaven of truth, love, and worship.

This mingled seed of truth and gladness is sown on the broad field of events, for the righteous. But as to all doing there must be a doer, so to all sowing there must be a sower. This tremendous Husbandman is God. The whole vast enterprise of subordinate spiritual existence is his. He owns the field. He built it : the innumerable mountainous worlds, the golden chain which supports the universe of being ; the seas of space in which they lie and float, and turn from darkness unto day, and drift through the seasons varied round ; the fertile plains of angelhood and humanity ; all are the product of his creative hand. He fenced it with the impassable barriers of Omnipotence —

with the strong chains of destiny — against all the “Dwellers of the Threshold.” He prepared it; enriched it with the precious blood of the God-man; broke it with the ploughshare of the ages, and harrowed it with the stormy years. The field is his.

And the seed is his as well. He took it from the diamond granary of the skies, measured it in the infinite bushel of love, and committed it to the soil with his own hand. Behold Him! From the chambers of eternal silence and mystery, where He dwelt in the vast forever of the past, He comes, laden with the diamonds of truth and the rubies of gladness, that, sown broadcast on all the fields of creation, they may produce in the end a harvest of immortal knowledge and felicity.

The seasons are his: the wintry eons of the eternal past, the spring-time of angelic life, the human summer solstice, and the autumn judgment, are all his.

Subordinate agents move by his direction, obedient to his will or limited by his power. Angels are the first and chief tenants of this infinite Landlord. They farm vast tracts of the material and spiritual universe: to each hierarch a world, to each subordinate a soul. Men are under-tenants; having, each, for his portion of the field, his own spiritual nature and as much of the social world around him as he is willing and able to cultivate. And Hell is the prison of all bankrupt debtors; the Marshalsea of the universe; the wretched home of the suicides of fate and the

spendthrifts of opportunity. But all — the angelic farmers, the human under-tenants, and the spiritual wrecks of perdition — all are his, and He holds them in his hand till the last day.

For there must be a harvest, alike to complete the scene and to perfect the season. This implies a return in kind for the seed sown. The law is uniform and universal — through all forms of vegetable, animal, and spiritual life, — like produces like ; like tree from tree ; like brute from brute ; from man, humanity ; from Satan, error and evil ; from God, purity and goodness ; so, ever, like from like.

Truth, sown, reproduces truth ; as gladness, sown, reproduces gladness. Thus in that harvest, the return will be in kind, — substantial truth and real gladness.

There will be also an appropriate return in quantity. The harvest will present as a reward for labor, “some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.”

The condition of periodicity will also be fulfilled in that harvest. “The season’s close” takes on a meaning here commensurate with the rank and sphere of the husbandman. The human season will have one grand period, the angelic another, and the Divine must comprehend all.

But some sheaves will be early ripe, — some return always coming in to the laborer. The Supreme and the subordinate agents, as they are always sowing, so are they, also, in one sense, and in some good degree, always reaping. Men on

earth, and angels in heaven, and God over all, are always receiving some substantial returns for all the truth and gladness which they scatter abroad.

But the dawn of eternity closes the season of this world. Then comes the harvest-home; when the loaded wain of earth shall be drawn by steeds of fire, upon the threshing floor of judgment; when the sheaves will be cast down and pounded with the flail of Omnipotence, till the pure grains of truth and gladness are separated from the straw and chaff of error and suffering; and then they shall be fanned by the breath of God, till they are pure from all evil, and heaped in the everlasting garner of the skies.

And all this "for the righteous, for the upright in heart;" that is, truth for the true, gladness for the glad, a harvest of truth and gladness for those who sowed the seed, and look for, and can appreciate the return. For the human righteous, shall the harvest be; for those who receive all the truth and gladness God has given them in this world as a sacred trust — a deposit of seed — to be scattered abroad, sown as they have power and opportunity; these shall receive a full and glorious and indefinitely multiplied return for all that they have done for their own spiritual culture, and for the help and comfort of their fellow-creatures.

• For the angelic righteous, shall the harvest be; for those who have kept their first estate, and are able still to thrust their hands into the granary of God, and take thence all the seed of truth and gladness that their celestial strength will enable them

to bear to the fields of their toil and endeavor; for these there shall be a harvest commensurate, in its glorious products, with the capacity and fidelity of each.

Finally, for the Divine Righteous, shall the harvest be; for God, the Everlasting Father, — who “so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son,” in whom met infinite truth and gladness, — “that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life,” — for Him shall the harvest of the redeemed be gathered from all the worlds of universal being. And for God, the Eternal Son, “Who hath loved us and redeemed us with his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God,” — lavishing for this purpose his whole Divine and human life to enrich the barren field of humanity, — for Him shall the harvest be. And for God, the Holy Ghost, who begot us again, unto the life spiritual and immortal, and who “maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered,” — for Him shall the harvest be; for “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”

## II.

### RATIONALE OF SALVATION.

“Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” — MARK i. 15.

“Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”  
— ACTS xx. 21.

LET it be supposed that, to an individual in the prime of life and maturity of mental power and culture, there were presented for the first time the doctrines of Repentance and Faith, as they are set forth in the Bible; that it had been previously explained to him that the race was fallen, sinful, condemned, and altogether destitute of hope and help in itself; that he had carefully read and deeply pondered the history of its divine redemption by Jesus Christ, the only Son of God; that he perfectly understood that this atonement was conditional, and that its chief and ultimate benefits depended upon human and individual volition; and that now, when he came to inquire of the name and character of the condition upon which he might be saved, he were divinely assured that it consisted, to him as to all other men, of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

He would naturally next inquire of the nature of repentance; and he would be again assured, if he believed the Bible, that it consisted in turning



honestly from sin to righteousness ; from evil to good ; from the world to God ; in seeking God with all the heart ; in the formation of a single and pure intention, always, and in all things, to work his will ; in proposing to himself this, as the great and only end of life, and resolutely bending to its accomplishment all his powers ; in purity of intention, producing purity of conduct as a constant and ever-growing effect ; in a word, that true “repentance toward God” consisted of entire consecration to God.

With this condition, let it be supposed that he professes himself satisfied, — as reasonable in itself, honorable to God, and beneficent to man ; but ere he starts on this path, he would be further informed of the nature of that *faith* which is expected — nay, *exacted* — from him as essential to justification.

Inquiring yet again at the mouth of God, — for he will and ought to have no less solvent assurance, — he is told that saving faith is the complete trust of the heart in Jesus Christ, for present, continual, and ultimate salvation ; that by faith Christ, in all his offices, is taken to the heart, — personally claimed, embraced, appropriated ; that, briefly, as repentance is essentially consecration, so faith is essentially appropriation.

Now then he is ready to act. The case is before him. He knows himself undone : experience, reason, and consciousness corroborate the Divine assurance of his ruin. Salvation is offered to him conditionally. He understands the condition, —

approves it. There is no motive for delay. His present unhappiness, his fleeting life, the uncertainty of its continuance, the possibility that the present gracious offer may shortly be withdrawn, — every consideration of reason, safety, duty, urges him to haste. If there be good in the plan, if there be happiness and heaven in it, he needs its balm, he aspires to its glory. And if, on the other hand, it be a false and specious delusion, he should be in haste to find it out, and seek elsewhere for salvation.

He resolves to accept the terms. He repents of all his sins. He pledges his soul's allegiance to Heaven. He renounces the world, and sin, and self. He intrusts all his interests to the hands of God. For himself, he will labor earnestly and only for God's glory, and submit meekly and always to his will. He binds himself, as the second party, to an eternal covenant of consecration. Thus emptied of self and the world, he is ready to be "filled with all the fullness of God;" to claim, appropriate, Christ.

And, like a lightning-heralded revelation from Heaven, *He* bursts into the void chambers of his soul! Sorrow and sin and gloom and despondency flee from his Divine Presence; pardon and regeneration and adoption and the witnessing Spirit, and peace and joy and love attend Him, and abide with Him, in the new-born Christian's heart.

And now, to this man, repentance and faith assume a new and more distinct, and altogether a

different aspect. They are no longer what they had seemed to him before, — cold, hard, dry, difficult, dead conditions of good, — reasonable but painful, full of anguish but necessary ; to which, as a prudent man, regardful of his own safety and happiness, he felt bound to submit, albeit he submitted with fear and trembling : he has found them warm and vital, easy and precious, instinct with Divine life and power ; living graces, wearing the hues of Heaven, and bringing to his tired heart a foretaste of its rest and joy.

Neither are they separate and independent, as he had thought. He discovers in them an essential harmony, a substantial agreement, common elements, a vital connection.

Better instructed, — instructed out of his own heart's experience, as well as divinely taught, — he learns that an essential element, in all true repentance, is courage. To give one's self away, wholly and forever ; to renounce all right and title to temporal and spiritual possession ; to surrender the complete direction and government of one's destiny into the hands of another, though that other be Almighty ; to devote one's all of life and powers to his service, — a service involving, necessarily and professedly, spiritual poverty, conflict, self-denial, hardship, and danger : this, he sees, requires no small degree of that manly quality known as courage. How vast the risk ! Only not infinite.

And this same quality, he discovers, in larger measure and more elevated tone, is a constituent

of that faith which has brought him salvation. It was a brave thing to give himself away; but it is a braver thing to appropriate, even so far as mortal may, the eternal God! To say of the everlasting Father, "He is mine;" of the uncreated Son, "He is my Saviour, Brother, Friend;" of the omnipotent Spirit of the universe, "He is my Comforter, and dwells within my heart as in a temple;" to reach out the hands of a human and finite faith, and grasp the Divine and hold it! Though encouraged by every possible condescension on the part of God, this, he sees, is an act of boundless spiritual daring, — the highest and boldest emprise of which humanity is capable in this world.

Looking more deeply into the essential nature of repentance, he finds, underlying this high courage, — this fearful risk, which has moved to such a degree his wonder and admiration, — the strongest and sublimest confidence in God. He, a creature of clay, an organ of sense, has risen so far above the sensual and earthly, as to commit the possession of his all, and the final arbitrament of his destiny, into the hands of a purely spiritual Being! As he thinks of how this act of consecration has brought the Invisible in sight, of how wonderfully to his appreciation it has magnified and glorified his goodness, how grand the light which it sheds alike upon his providence and grace, — he almost fancies that he has caught a glimpse of the infinite Reason which determined, and still upholds, the changeless conditions of salvation!

And this same confidence in God, tremendously increased and reaching the height of the true sublime, he finds again in faith. By this act, he has partaken of the divine excellency ; brought home to his heart something of the divine purity ; claimed and received a title to everlasting felicity. He, the guilty rebel, has had audience with the King of kings, and has brought home a free pardon for all his offenses, and an assurance of royal favor and friendship ! Standing upon the brink of the real, and catching but a glimpse of the Spirit of the void, he has dared to leap out into that dread abysmal Unknown ; and lo ! the “ Everlasting Arms ” have encircled him ! and he has lain upon the breast of boundless and ineffable Love ! and *his* heart has caught its glow, and *his* eye is lighted with its fires, and *his* hands shall be henceforth consecrated to its labors !

Underlying, still, this essential harmony in the elements of repentance and faith, he discerns between them a vital connection ; that they are interdependent, the one upon the other ; that they have no separate life ; that neither can exist apart from the other ; that while repentance may be first in the order of thinking, there is no appreciable interval of time between the moment of its ascendancy in the heart and the moment of the exercise of saving faith ; that immediately the grace of repentance is improved, God always gives the grace of faith ; that, pressing hard upon the retiring forces of sin, driven out by the act of entire consecration, come the new and heavenly occupants

of his soul, brought in by the act of complete appropriation ; in a word, that where repentance is not, faith is not ; and where faith is not, repentance cannot be.

He feels that he cannot sufficiently admire this evidence of a wisdom all divine ; for by this fact, of the vital connection between repentance and faith, there is always, ready-furnished to his soul, a double test, intensely palpable to consciousness, of his own spiritual state. He can make his candid appeal on either ground, and the result is always undoubting conviction. "Is anything wanting to his complete consecration?" he asks of Consciousness ; and if he honestly ask, she will never deceive him ; and if she answer, "Yes," he knows by consequence that his faith is the creature of imagination and enthusiasm ; a myth and a delusion ; a "cunningly devised," but essentially devilish, semblance of that angel Grace. Again, he asks of Consciousness to testify to the existence in his heart of present saving faith ; and if she do not answer promptly and clearly, "Yes," he knows, by a similar consequence, that his repentance or consecration is imperfect. He cannot be consecrated to God without believing savingly in Christ ; and he cannot believe in Christ, to the saving of his soul, without being entirely consecrated to God.

And now it is that he learns from experience that repentance and faith have become living forces in his soul, — constantly, more and more powerfully interactive and reproductive. He remembers

that his first true and deep repentance produced, as its necessary and immediate effect, his first exercise of saving faith. Having given himself away to God in consecration, Christ instantly became to him, by appropriation, a more than equivalent substitute. Having emptied his heart of the world and sin, its instant and intense longing drew Christ to its possession. Out of the depth of his poverty came the abundance of his riches. And this is the divine order in all spiritual things. Repentance made him "poor in spirit," and his poverty of spirit made him the heir in possession of the beatitude: his *was* "the kingdom of Heaven." His repentance gave him the right, title, and possession of that faith which brought him salvation, and filled his heart with peace and joy.

But again, no sooner did he receive grace to believe "with the heart unto righteousness," than he found himself in possession of a force which reacted upon his consecration or repentance, broadening and deepening it every moment. Having received Christ, and found in Him the highest delight which his soul ever experienced, he naturally desires more of Him; and in order to make room for this Divine Person, he must more and more completely empty his heart of selfishness and sin. It is true that he had done this, to the best of his knowledge and ability, before; but now, with the presence of the Triune God within him, there has come new light and added strength: the Light has shown him sin lurking in his heart; the Strength has girded him to battle with the secret foe, and

cast him out. Thus his faith increases and purifies his repentance.

Again, this broader and deeper and purer consecration reproduces a larger and stronger and closer appropriation of Christ. In just proportion as he gives himself to God, God gives Himself to him. In just proportion to the perfectness of his consecration, is his right to the worth and use of the Atonement. In just proportion as he empties his heart of self and worldliness and sin, does Christ fill it with his own presence. Thus, his constantly deepening repentance produces a continually strengthening faith.

This added volume and power of faith reacts still again upon his repentance more effectually than ever, with each repetition. As the "Light of life," which Faith kindles in his heart, grows brighter and brighter, under the influence of the consecration which he brings to feed its flame, more and more of the imperfectness of his sacrifice is revealed to Consciousness; and he has but to ask and have grace for yet purer and deeper devotion.

He does not curiously ask if this process must not soon reach an end; if the consecration will not soon be complete. O, there are deeps in his nature — of infirmity, if not of sin — which induce him to think sometimes that it may go on forever; and that in the sweep of ages, too remote for mortal calculation, he may still be adding to that sacrifice which he has here only begun to pile!

Repentance is like the fabled shield, of which



one side was silver and the other gold. The silver side of repentance is sorrow for sin, but the golden side is consecration to God. Those who look only at the former, and imagine that is all, will never know what true repentance means. They will know nothing of Christian faith, love, peace, or joy. They will go mourning all their days, and never be delivered from their sins. But those who look at both sides, and fall in love with this piece of celestial armor, and then gird it on their souls for the whole battle of life, will certainly never lay it down in this world, and in all probability will bear it through all the conflicts of immortality. Indeed, there is nothing transient or perishable in the whole machinery of salvation; nothing which is to be worn out and cast away. The saving and developing of spiritual life demands imperishable instrumentalities. Faith will never, as we sometimes falsely sing, "be lost in sight;" nor will hope ever be "swallowed up in fruition." These, with all other qualities and graces of the spirit, grow with gratification, and develop new strength and power with every fresh realization of their objects; and so they will do to all eternity. If repentance might ever be completed and passed by, memory must perish, or we must cease to regret our remembered sins; and spiritual acquisition must cease, or we must no longer render unto God our all. In reason and fact, then, the work of neither repentance nor faith will ever be finished, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. What St. Paul means, when he exhorts us to leave

“the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on to perfection,” is nothing like this, but only that, instead of resting content with beginning the Christian life, we should “grow in grace” from day to day, by the very same means by which our spiritual life was begun : and those means are, and ever will be, “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Therefore bid these angel graces, Repentance and Faith, welcome to your soul, and hold them in your heart forever.

### III.

#### ESSENTIALITY OF DEPENDENCE ON GOD.

“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” — JER. xii. 5.

IN the chapter from which the text is taken the prophet, discouraged by the difficulties and seeming inequalities of life, asks permission to reason with the Almighty of his judgments; and having made his complaint, of the prosperity of the wicked and the delay of Heaven's vengeance to destroy them, God answers him in these words of reproof: “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” In other words, “If thou art already discouraged and complaining under the burden of life's ordinary and inevitable afflictions, how wilt thou do when heavier trials shall come, and when the last trial of all shall overtake thee?” We trust that we shall not be thought fanciful or extravagant if we see, in these words, a deeper significance than the attendant circumstances alone would seem to give them; since, as we are divinely instructed, “no

Scripture is of any private interpretation," but all its words and events contain lessons for the instruction of human nature, in all times and places. The broad general truth, then, which we conceive to be couched in these figurative words, is this: that the lessons of personal weakness and self-distrust, which men ought to learn from the events of ordinary life, should warn them of their utter inability to contend with the judgments of Heaven, either temporal or eternal. A truer truth, more strongly corroborated by every man's experience and observation of life, Revelation has not imparted.

Who can sustain, unaided by Divine grace and unwearied in the struggle, the burdens of life's common lot? When we reflect that, in the experience of the most fortunate of men,—the most nearly exempt from the common troubles of humanity,—there must be a vast amount of physical suffering; that the head will sometimes ache; that the strongest frame is neither invulnerable to disease, nor insensible to its pangs; that, amid the changing circumstances of even the happiest life, there must be a considerable proportion of physical discomfort; that the luxuries and conveniences which exempt one from discomfort, become sources of annoyance and pain when, as must often be the case, they are temporarily beyond his reach; that the regimen, which can alone render him independent of these things, is in itself a torture; that utter weariness and exhaustion must succeed every severe exertion of his physical powers; that lassi-

tude must often bind his active limbs, as with fetters of steel; that there are weary days and sleepless nights of pain in store for even him; and that, to crown all, he is doomed to a gradual decay; that the tide of life must ebb slowly and painfully away; that the senses must decline, little by little, their wonted cheerful service; that manhood's powerful arm, and vigorous limb, and lithe elastic frame, must wither to the palsied feebleness of age; that the whole splendid human machine must languish slowly into dust;—when we remember all this, and much more with which calm reflection will supply us, as inevitably included in the lot of that man who lives out his days, are we not led, with emphasis, to repeat the question, Who, unaided by Divine grace, can uncomplainingly submit to such a lot?

And when we further reflect that, in addition to the heavy load of physical suffering, every man must bear his just proportion of intellectual toil and travail; that his apprehension is so dull, and his judgment so poor and feeble, that education is the task of a life-time, and even then must be left unfinished; that common intelligence can be purchased but at the cost of years of painful labor; that every path to signal intellectual excellence is blocked and hedged with obstacles whose removal will require the long continued and painful exertion of all the powers of his soul; that the mental discipline, which can alone constrain his faculties to faithful and efficient service, is a wearing, wearying weight upon the spirit, and

that if lifted for ever so short a time, his energies will escape, and must be again pursued and overtaken and subjugated; that he must resolutely close his eyes to the appeals of a world of beauty and bloom and song; that, like the knights of old, he must inure himself to spiritual hunger, and thirst, and cold, and vigil, before he is qualified to support the armor or wield the weapons of intellectual strife; and that all this painful training is but preparatory to a career of still more painful struggle and trial; that on those dizzy heights whither, lured by the flash of her angel pinions, he essays to climb in search of Truth, there lurks many a deadly peril, and there awaits him many a wild, fierce conflict; that there in solitude of soul he must contend single-handed with the demons of Doubt and Error; that he must endure those spiritual throes, that intellectual travail, whose issue is humility or madness; and that, at last, if he be not lost, — if he do not fall from some of those giddy heights among which he has so long lingered into utter ruin, — he must return, a broken-spirited and humbled man, thrown and baffled and beaten in his vain struggles — he must return to die; when we remember that all these ills are in the intellectual portion of the worldly inheritance of the most gifted of men, may we not return, with added emphasis and intenser feeling, to the question, Who, unaided by Divine Grace, is able, without complaining, to bear all this?

And when, more deeply reflecting, we add to

the physical pain and intellectual toil and trouble, which the most fortunate and gifted of earth may not escape, the heart-wounds which he must receive and wear; when we remember that, until his heart is seared and scarred all over, it must writhe and bleed and ache; that the delicate chords of sensibility, which in childhood lie open to every passing breeze of gentle influence, must be often rudely shocked and harshly jarred, until their tones of feeling are forever dead;—or if they cannot die,—if there be something so gloriously immortal in his nature that torture cannot slay them,—at least till all their soul of sound swells into one life-long note of pain; that his wealth of affection must be lavished on some who will give him little or none in return; that Friendship will sometimes prove false, and Love deceitful and changeful; that his confidence will be often misplaced and betrayed; that the boundless aspirations of his nature for purity and power, which would soar even to the Heaven of God, are barred by sin and chained by infirmity to the earth; that his very efforts for the relief of his suffering kind will but serve to unveil to him more and intenser pain, which he cannot soothe or relieve; that a thousand malignant influences will make war upon his noblest purposes, and defeat his most cherished plans; that opposition and hindrance and hatred will often come from sources upon which he had confidently relied for coöperation and gratitude; that he must sometimes receive curses where he has lavished only blessings; that his thirst for

human appreciation and sympathy can never be satisfied ; that of all to whom he throws wide the door of his heart, but few will ever care to enter, — and they but to gratify a profane curiosity and leave the sacred place disordered, dismantled, and stained ; till, wearied and disgusted, and despairing of what he would, he closes and bars it up forever : when we remember, with remembrance heightened by bitter experiences, that all this is in the life of a man, is there not a note of anguish in the tones of the question, Who, unhelped of God, can bear it without complaining ?

And when, still further reflecting, we call to mind that, in addition to all these outward ills, which the most fortunate, gifted, and blessed of men, in any worldly sense, is compelled to endure, he has an inward enemy, against whose fiery assaults his soul can set up no defense ; that Conscience holds place within the citadel, and is piercing him perpetually with a thousand stings ; that if she seem to slumber for a while, it is only in seeming ; for she is all the time adding fuel to her fires and barbing her relentless arrows ; that she allows the tortured spirit absolutely no repose ; that she poisons the cup of worldly pleasure, till it becomes the loathing of his soul ; that she destroys all his bright illusions, and shows him a deadly serpent lurking beneath every flower towards which he extends his eager hand ; that she quenches, to his eye, the gleam of his shining hoards, with the memory of the blood and tears and wrong which bought them ; that she clouds the splendor of his



equipage, and darkens the luxurious elegance of his home ; that she inscribes, in the handwriting of God, "Poverty of Heart" on all his riches ; that she sullies his proudest triumphs with disappointment and desolation of soul ; that she comes, in the flush of his political success, or in the pride of his social exaltation, to humble him to the dust with the assurance that he is a guilty and polluted thing ; that she withers every laurel which the world can bind upon his brow, and poisons all the caresses of popular favor ; that she goads him to frenzy in every desperate and exciting struggle of his life, and then approaches him in every calm, unguarded hour with the terrible words, "Death ! Judgment ! Eternity ! God !" and utters them again and again in the ear of his painfully conscious spirit, until he trembles, and shudders, and writhes, and groans ; when we remember that he stands thus, all his life, between conflicting and always assailing fires ; with the world to torment him from without and conscience to torture him from within ; is there not solemn mockery of human nature in the question, Who, unaided from Above, can uncomplainingly submit to such a lot ?

Yet these are common and inevitable events ; these are but "*footmen*" in the great race of life. Ah ! thou worn, hardened, worldly man ! thou hast had experience of these things. Thou hast groaned under the pangs of physical pain. Thou hast been sorely bruised and deeply wounded, in thine intellectual conflicts with Doubt and Error.

Thou hast learned, of Fickleness, and Falsehood, and Treachery, to distrust men. Thou hast felt the stings of Remorse and trembled at the voice of Conscience ; and, disguise it as thou wilt, thou art aware ; sometimes even sick at heart and tired of life. Hear, then, to-day the warning question of God : “ If thou hast run with these *footmen*, and *they* have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses ? ” If you cannot bear, without utter weariness, the common lot of man, how will you meet those special and severe judgments of Heaven which certainly await the impenitent ?

I remember me of one who impiously dared Heaven to this trial. Something there was, in his high place and regal power and appointments, which caused him to forget that he was but a man. He waited, and hardened his heart, and stubbornly refused to obey the divine command, until God’s judgments had turned to blood all the waters of his fair land, and filled them with corruption and decay ; till loathsome and slimy reptiles leaped upon his table and in his bed ; until disgusting vermin filled every crevice of his palace, and every seam and fold of his royal robes ; till all the cattle of his fields were dead, and their decaying bodies polluted the air ; till his own person, and those of all his servants, were smitten with a most painful disease ; till a terrible hail destroyed man and beast and vegetation, while ethereal fires ran along the earth, and awful thunders rent the sky ; till a cloud of winged enemies, wide as the visible hori-

zon, and darkening the heavens as they flew, came to destroy what the hail had left; till darkness which might be felt, and which no light kindled by human hand could resist or penetrate, covered the earth for days as with a pall, — as if his kingdom were dead and Heaven had confined it in night; until the returning light came, not in mercy but in judgment, to reveal to his startled eyes the clay-cold image of the heir of his crown and his throne, and to fill his ears with the cries of thousands mourning for their dead; until he had rashly adventured, with the chivalrous thousands of his kingdom, into that splendid path between the divided waters which God had opened for his own people; and at the wave of the prophet's rod an ocean was hurled upon their doomed heads; and the watery grave of that hapless prince and his buried host, over which to-day rolls the angry surge and sings their wild requiem, is an everlasting monument of the resistless judgments of God. Ay, these were the *steeds* of Heaven, whose fiery force no mortal may resist.

But events like these, you will say, belong to an age gone by; are parts of the miraculous providence of God, never revealed since that olden time. How came you to this conclusion? When did God abdicate the throne of the universe, or lay down the sceptre of efficient providence? Who told you that He had committed the government of the world to insensible and inflexible laws, and retired from the personal superintendency of its events and the control of its destiny? Whence came this

theory of providence? Not from Him; for He everywhere in his sacred word declares its converse. Not from history; for it is full of the tokens of his power, and the proofs of his interference. Not from our observation or experience of life; for it is made up, in large part, of particular providences; and that man's spiritual eye is simply blind, who cannot see the hand of God in many of the events which have delivered him from peril, or supplied his wants, or subjected him to trial. Not from reason; for how can infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness turn away from the sentient creatures of its hand, and leave them without sympathy, protection, or discipline, in a world full of moral and physical evil and intellectual error, to grope in darkness, to stumble in blindness, the slaves of Chance and the sport of Hell? How came we by such a theory of providence? It is a part of the subtle infidelity which is cursing the world, and which has come to mingle its foul tide with some of the purest lessons of parental piety and love. No, God has not left the world, and never will leave it. For judgment and mercy alike, He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." All life's events are the touches of a divine hand; and whether they torture us with pain or thrill us with pleasure, they are one and all intended for our purity and well-being.

And if—the question recurs—if, as a sinful man, you have grown weary under these kind and gentle touches of the Divine finger, how will you bear the full weight of that Almighty hand, when

it is laid on you in judgment? for, if you continue impenitent, laid on you it certainly will be, if there be truth in history, force in reason, or faithfulness in the pledge of God. How will you contend with disease and pain when God, because you have despised the riches of his long-suffering and goodness, which would have *led* you to repentance, shall make your life one long, unending pang? when He shall wither your strength, and paralyze your limbs, and rack you with physical anguish? Do you say, "He will not do this, — He does not always do this; some wicked men die suddenly and without pain." Then so much the worse for you. Do you covet their doom? Would you be hurried suddenly, with all your sins black upon your soul, into the presence of God? I am supposing Him to deal with you in mercy, and to afflict you in order to bring you to repentance. How will you bear that affliction? Will you still wait, until your stubborn impenitence shall compel the Almighty either to send upon you a withering curse, or in a moment to hurl you into eternity?

Hitherto you have exulted in the possession, unimpaired or increasing in vigor and applicability, of the intellectual powers with which God has so wondrously endued you. Like the old poet, your mind has been a kingdom to you; and you have felt a pride almost regal in wielding the sceptre of its splendid capabilities. O, your brain! your brain! You have fancied it a rich, an inalienable inheritance. You have boasted publicly, or you have exulted silently, in the thought that, if ad-

verse fortune were to strip you of every worldly possession, it could not yet take from you those mental powers, by which you would be able to win anew earth's brightest and best gifts. But how will you do when God shall lay his hand upon that magnificent instrument, your mind, and rend, one after another, all its matchless chords away? or break every string with one resistless blow? You, who have gloried in your intellectual power and wealth, how will you endure mental imbecility, decay, madness? Do you say, again, "He will not do this, — or He may not?" It is true that He may not; but it is equally true that He may. Earth's bedlams are fearful warnings! And will you incur the peril? or the still more deadly one of waiting, and consecrating your mind to sin and guilt, in the future as you have done in the past, until God's impatient hand shall snatch that instrument of evil from time and toss it into eternity, and burden it with the discords of everlasting woe?

You have reveled heretofore — in your hours of relaxation from worldly pursuits — you have rejoiced in the happiness of home. There, if nowhere else in this world, you have found Innocence and Purity; and under the gentle caresses of their loving hands, your worn and tired spirit has grown young and fresh again. But how will you do when God shall visit, in judgment on your sins and impenitency, that home? when you shall be called to stand, as others have stood, by a lonely hearthstone, with not one spark of love or friend-

ship shining there ; with only the dead ashes of past and perished affections lying bleakly and coldly around you ? with all that you have ever truly and deeply loved covered with the earth-mold ? when, orphaned, and widowed, and childless, and friendless, and forlorn, like a withered and blasted oak, you shall stand alone in life's barren field, the sport of every storm and the mark for every vengeful bolt that hurtles through the social sky ? Or, if God should suffer these friends to linger by your side until you are taken, will it soften the anguish of the final parting that their tearful kisses accompany you to the door of your doom ? — that their beseeching hands and voices implore you to stay ? Will you wait till Heaven's vengeful sword shall sever every precious link that binds you to earth before you repent ? Will you wait until Conscience, long bound and silent it may be, endued in a moment with resistless strength, shall burst the bonds which confined her, and braid them into a "whip of scorpions," and lash your tortured spirit into a tempest of agony, before you repent ? Will you wait until your heart is desolate and broken ? Will you wait until your mind is cursed with impotence or madness ? Will you wait until your body is racked with pain and loathsome with disease ? Will you wait till the death-rattle is sounding in your throat ? Will you wait till the doom-storm has gathered and is about to burst upon your head ? Will you wait till the judgment-fires are kindled and ready to consume you ? Ah ! then you will have waited too long. No human

foot can contend, in swiftness, with these furious steeds of Heaven; no human arm, in force, with the waves of that last cold, dark Jordan, whose icy spray may be falling, with numbing power, upon your heart to-day.



#### IV.

##### “JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED.”

“For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” — 1 COR. ii. 2.

JESUS CHRIST symbolizes the Atonement. There are two necessary conditions of an atonement: forfeiture and an equivalent substitute. The forfeiture may be partial or complete, small or great; but in either case, the substitute must equal or exceed it. Otherwise, the creditor cannot be satisfied, nor the injury repaired. If we say the creditor or injured party may, at his pleasure, be satisfied with *less* than an equivalent substitute for the forfeiture, we impair to that extent the idea of atonement, and deal with the offender at the expense of justice. In that case, the atonement is at best but partial and incomplete.

Let us see if these conditions are met in the Atonement symbolized by the name of Jesus Christ. By the sin of the federal representative of our race, all human spiritual life was forfeited. The condition of that life was, and is, loyalty to God. This condition is essential; and not arbitrary and accidental, as is evinced by the simple fact that loyalty to God and spiritual life are convertible terms.

When man sinned, he ceased, spiritually, to live.

To this agrees the divine warning: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Disobeying God, man ate; and in that day all spiritual life was extinguished on earth. There reigned only spiritual death, — a dark presage of eternal death. But in relief of the gloom of that hour, infinite Beneficence devised and promised an Atonement. Upon that rayless spiritual night there broke one gleam of future hope. It was seen in the words, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." "The fullness of time" was not yet. Thousands of years must come and go ere the God-Man should be actually laid upon the altar; but over all that dreary temporal chasm shone the light of this splendid promise, and bridged and illumined, for the eye and foot of Faith, a path to its coming Saviour.

That Saviour was perfect God and perfect man. See here the fulfillment of the condition of equivalence: as all human spiritual life was forfeited, so all Divine spiritual life was substituted: *all*; "for in Him dwelleth all the fullness, of the Godhead bodily." It was as if a stream had sinned, and all its sources should come forward to atone; as if the mist had offended, and the waters should become its suffering substitute; as if a sunbeam darkened, and its parent source had hastened to redeem and relume it; as if time were insolvent, and eternity had become its surety. There could be no question of the sufficiency of the Substitute; since it was God and man atoning for man.

We see, thus, how one could atone for many;

because the dignity of the one guiltless Offering was in grand excess of the dignity of human nature, and because the capacity for suffering of the one sinless Victim was in terrible excess of the capacity for suffering of the whole sinning race.

We see, again, in this Atonement, an explanation of the ancient mystery of the blood-offering; because blood was, and is, and ever will be the double symbol of suffering and of death; and suffering and death only can atone for sin. This truth is illustrated by every statute in the whole organic law of our being. Whoever violates, suffers — dies — is the inevitable decree. To suffer death was the doom of Adam for original sin; to suffer death, our doom for actual sin; from both, the Atonement saved him and saves us, by providing for us a sufficient Substitute.

If we ask, — as we must, or silence the very instincts of our intellectual nature, — “How *could* the sufferings of one atone for the sins of all?” we are forced to reply only by aggregating and condensing — in a word, by heaping the whole volume of the world’s merited anguish upon a single sinless sufferer. But human nature is not strong enough to bear such a load; and therefore was God made man; therefore there was infused into the human soul of the Offering a Divine energy and strength to enable Him to sustain the weight of all our woe. Is this unphilosophical? The very converse. The insensate, half-brutal man is scarcely conscious of what tortures a finer and more delicate organism. Can we not, then, conceive of an almost infinite

refinement and quickening of sensibility? Can we not still further aggravate, in our imagination, every sense and perception of physical and mental pain, in this fine organization, by all the resources of unlimited Power? Then name this Being, Jesus Christ, and we have the symbol and substance of the Atonement. Oh! "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him!" "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body!" "With his stripes we are healed!"

What other light, than that which shines from this exposition, can pierce the mystery of his Passion? How else can we explain that agony of apprehension, which convulsed Him in the Garden, and stained the earth on which He knelt with the crimson tokens of its power; and even wrung from the pitying Heavens an angel minister of comfort and strength? Other men have suffered death by lingering torments, without such exhibitions of dread. The Eastern stoic, the Western savage, and the Christian martyr, have shown a fortitude which has defied the extremes of ingenious cruelty. Was our Saviour less firm than they? No. It was because the tremendous aggregate of all the pains justly incurred by every individual, — of thousands of millions, both in time and eternity, — was piled on his devoted heart! What wonder that He shrank, when, superadded to all earthly human woe, there came, to feed upon his anguish the thirsty fires of Hell? Therefore, "Being in an agony, He prayed;" therefore, "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood;" therefore, all

the fullness of the Godhead, dwelling in Him bodily, was needful to sustain Him in being during those three dreadful hours; in which were concentrated all the pains of earth and hell, of time and eternity; and therefore, when those hours were expired, and the Atonement perfected, and the indwelling Divinity departing, He had only space to cry, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” and to add, in a death-cadence, the response, “It is finished;” ere the superincumbent weight of that mountain of torture crushed out of the Son of Man the last quivering pulse of life. “His visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,” and his “vesture dipped in blood.”

This Atonement symbolizes, exemplifies, and glorifies humility. We have first a Divine example: the Son of God “humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death.” No other example of humility is comparable with that afforded by the voluntary stoop of authority. Were an absolute monarch to descend from his throne, and submit to the control of his subjects, it would be a wonderful example of humility. How much more striking when infinite Authority becomes abject, penal, and deadly servitude! Precisely such, is the example given; and the result glorifies the grace. Man is endued with the authority of God. “To Him every knee shall bow.” He hath sat down in the throne of his Father. He ever liveth and reigneth.

This Atonement symbolizes, exemplifies, and

glorifies sacrifice. This term should always preserve, in the mind of the Christian, its double significance. It implies an offering to God and a benefit to man. Whenever we benefit man, we present also a sacrifice to God; and the sacrifice is acceptable to God in proportion to its personal cost to us. The example furnished by the Atonement is in apt and powerful illustration. The Divine Law was infracted, and the transgressor ruined. A single act must vindicate the Law, and redeem the sinner. A ransom must be paid. But who in the universe is able and willing, at once to satisfy an infinite Divine demand, and supply an infinite human want? Behold! from the chambers of his own eternity issues the Ancient of days with the price in his hand! That price is all the difference, in seeming, between God and man. Omnipotence must become, to all appearance, impotence; Omniscience, ignorance; glory, obloquy; self-existence, mortality. Did he pay it? The records of Heaven tell of the Sent of God. The records of earth tell of a shining retinue which attended to this world a celestial stranger, and celebrating his incarnation with songs of joyous greetings to its inhabitants, and then, vanishing in the darkened skies, were seen no more. Then follows the life of the wondrous Child, and of the still more wonderful Man. Where was the glory of the Godhead then? If it be said, it was seen in his miracles, I answer, nay; for his disciples were his equals in that power. Where were the tokens of omnipotence when He

knelt prone and helpless, in his great agony, and prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me?” when He was arrested by an armed mob? when He was condemned and delivered to the scoffs and jeers of the soldiery? when He was scourged, and spit upon, and mocked, and smitten in the face, and crowned with thorns? when He bent, even to falling, under the burden of his own cross? when, helpless among his executioners, He was seized and extended on the instrument of torture? when his hands and feet were nailed to the pitiless wood? when He hung for hours, a spectacle to men, and angels, and devils? when those who passed by railed on Him, and wagged the head in mockery, and said, “If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross?” Where was omnipotence when all this was done to God, and “He answered not a word?” Where were the signs of omniscience, during the helplessness, ignorance, and incapacity of his infancy and childhood, and when He said, “The Son knoweth not?” Where was his glory, when the scornful and indignant reprobation of a nation shouted “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Yes, He paid the price. Divinity was abased, in seeming, to humanity.

And the result, again, glorifies the grace. Man becomes as God. Divinity has not scorned and cast off forever its humble companion. Widowed Humanity, with the ashes of the tomb upon her brow, has lain for days and nights senseless, pulseless, and cold; but the prophetic hour strikes, and her dull ear hears and owns the voice of the com-

ing God. A mighty angel attends his steps, before whose touch human and material obstacles sink down. Godhead reclaims its human mate! The grave becomes a bridal chamber, and types the resurrection of all who are kindred to the bride; and forth from the tomb issue the Divine Pair, so wondrously united that none can say which is God and which is man. Impotence becomes as omnipotence; ignorance, omniscience; obloquy, glory; and mortality, self-existence.

The Atonement symbolizes, exemplifies, and glorifies love. The essence of this Divine sentiment is benevolence; and all on earth which passes by its name, but lacks this grand essential, is but a base and spurious counterfeit. To love, is to bless. Take away from any phase of human affection this golden element, and what remains is the vile dross of selfish passion. We have in the Atonement a Divine example of love. Man is bankrupt. No mere pound of his flesh is in the bond, but soul and body for time and eternity. The inexorable creditor is Right; and He will, he *can*, abate not one jot or tittle of His immense demand. Infinite Solvency beholds, pities, loves; and assures to Justice the full equivalent of his claim. Here, on the part of God, is an infinite gift bestowed, and on the part of man an infinite benefit realized. If it be objected that, where the resources are exhaustless, the greatness of a gift argues nought for the love of the giver, since He cannot miss what he bestows; we reply, first, no man, however large his means, ever missed what he bestowed in pure



charity ; and, secondly, where the gift touches the person of the giver, however vast his riches, the objection is without point. The latter is the very case in hand. God gave God and man to redeem man. God left his throne in heaven, and came to earth on an errand of love to man. The intense sympathy of the Divine nature voiced itself in humanity ; and in Jesus Christ we have the living and enduring expression of his Father’s love for us, — a love so mighty that it heaved an era into the annals of creation. How else so touchingly could God express his love for man ? He could not weep, suffer, die, because He is God ; but He created a being who could, shut up his ubiquity in the walls of humanity, and dwelt for years, like the genii of Eastern story, shorn apparently of his Divine attributes, that man might see, in the tears of Jesus Christ, the grief of God ; in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, the sympathy of God ; and in the death of Jesus Christ, the love of God.

The result again glorifies the grace. The love-freighted soul of Christ was the venture ; the love-kindled souls of the millions redeemed by Christ are the return. Heard ye of a great multitude, whom no man could number, who had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ? These are the harvest, sprung from that one seed of Divine love which God planted in the soil of humanity.

These three symbols of the Cross are one ; and united, type and epitomize the true philosophy of life. “ He that humbleth himself shall be exalted ;

and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." "Give, and it shall be given you again;" withhold, and "it tendeth to poverty." "It is more blessed to give, than to receive." "He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for my sake, shall find it." "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." He that will be loved, must love. Above all, he that will realize God's saving love in Christ, must give his heart to God and his life to good.

Therefore the Apostle's determination to know nothing among the Corinthians save Jesus, and Him crucified. It was enough to know. It was the all of life. It was worthy of the heart and head of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. What worthier or nobler object of human devotion can thought suggest? Wealth, honor, pleasure, the world's prizes, — how they sink into their native insignificance when held up for a moment beside the Cross!

Come, then, to Jesus, with your affluent intellect and fiery energies! Here are room and scope for all. Come, sad heart, with wealth of wasted love; come, and pour your treasures here. Come! and all will be saved, both here and hereafter. Stay! and all will be lost, both in time and eternity.

## V.

### RETROSPECTION AND REFORM.

A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

As the traveller, in a mountainous country, pauses ever and anon when his foot wins some new height, to look back upon the distance which he has achieved, and searches eagerly for the most remote point in the horizon which he remembers to have passed, and, when he finds it, is but half certain whether it be earth or cloud, and following with his eye every intervening hill-top which marks his progress, and dwelling mentally a moment upon each, reaches at last the nearest height, and thence traces, in all its deviations, that winding path through the separating valley which led him to where he now stands, — so does it become us, standing to-day, by the grace of God, upon one of the mountain peaks of life, to look back upon our past, and gather, from the failures and errors which mar the retrospect, that wisdom of repentance of which alone is born the purity of purpose which can both guide and gild the future. There are high points in every life ; whence backward over the past memory darts, and forward to the future springs joyous and exulting hope ; and such we have ventured to rank this festival season, in which the birthday

of the world's Redeemer is greeted with acclamations from the lips of the world's Childhood; and in which the Old Year dies and is waked and buried by the jubilant nations, holding high carnival over his grave; and the New Monarch of the seasons puts on his ice-jeweled diadem, which Spring's warm breath shall melt away only to recrown him with her flowers; which Summer's sultry suns again shall wither, but to show her wealthier and more substantial largess; and Autumn's gorgeous dyes and bounteous harvests shall fill him with plenty, and cover him with glory; till again, in the sad, sad end, the tears of the dying Year shall turn to ice-gems on his pale and withered face.

Standing thus to-day upon the dividing ridge of the past and future, and elevated, by the scenes and circumstances which surround us, to a point of observation and reflection which commands on either hand an extended view of life, let us look backward upon the course which we have already run. Far away in the dim distance, where the earth of memory seems to touch the sky of imagination and form the horizon of our past, there rises, indistinctly, mistily, dreamily, and but half discerned, a little hillock which we term Childhood. At the first effort, we can hardly see it; but the mental eye, having found and fixed it, and looking through the magnifying lens of recollection, its proportions gradually enlarge, and its outlines become distinct. It is peopled with ghostly forms that have long been slumbering in the dust.

Father and mother, sister and brother, playmate and home, — we see them again, as we saw them in life's beautiful morning-tide, when the dew was on the flower, and the rising sun of hope threw a glory over all. Our little griefs and cares, our little joys and sorrows, our little hopes and fears, — how distinct and vivid they appear to-day, as we look lingeringly and regretfully back upon our innocent childhood! Oh! could we have dreamed then that we should ever become what we are now, — the hardened, worldly men; the vain, frivolous women, — should we not have knelt down there, in the purity and freshness of our life's morning, and humbly asked of God the grace of an early death?

But nearer and more distinct to Memory's eye, heavy with a ranker verdure, and bright with a richer beauty, and bathed in its own "purpureal light," rises the hill of Youth. How the pulse of the weary pilgrim on life's journey bounds, as he looks back to it once more! The flowers of Fancy that bloomed there, — the very memory of their beauty and fragrance dizzies us now, — what wonder that they intoxicated us then? The jewels of Imagination that sparkled there! — even now they seem better worth than all the coarser treasures we have won, — why should we not have deemed them, then, life's dearest and richest gems? The gorgeous bow of Hope that spanned that fair horizon! whose seven-fold dyes of love, and friendship, and truth, and power, and fame, and glory, and immortality seemed brighter and steadier than

the sun, — how could we have dreamed, then, that one after another they would fade away, and leave the whole sky of our lives leaden-hued and dark and ominous, as it has frowned so often since, — as it frowns, perchance, to-day? The high, glad, bounding health which then coursed in our veins and made it joy to be, has vanished from our blood, and left its pulses languid and feeble and slow; or if they quicken, it is under the touch of the fiery scourge of pain. Our generous confidence has withered and hardened into a cold and settled distrust. Our lofty purposes are abased to pelf, or dirty with the sensual mire in which we daily wallow. Our noble aims are dwarfed and contracted to the mean circle of our selfish cravings. Our innocence is lost, our purity soiled, our hope disappointed, our promise broken, and our whole life degraded and debased. Alas! that in looking for our lost Youth, we should have to strain our eyes upward, as to a far and almost forgotten height, from which we have fallen to become the bruised and broken creatures which we are to-day, halting our sad way to the grave!

But nearest of all to where we now stand, rise the memories and hopes of one year ago. There we stood on that last annual height which our feet ever pressed, and rejoiced and exulted, or mourned, repented, and prayed, as we do to-day. Then, too, we looked backward over the past, and forward to the future. We thought of our sins and follies, our fading hopes and feeble purposes, our wasted hours and waning lives; and there and

then, it may be, we solemnly resolved to redeem the future. With the earnest purpose to be better men and women, we started upon the path of the past year, and by the mercy of God have won another annual height. From this point we can look back over the valley which lies between us and one year ago, and mark every track which our feet have left. Alas! it is not the straight and narrow path which we resolved to tread. A wandering, zigzag course arrests the eye. We marvel how soon and often we left the line of right. There stole Temptation to our side; and we paused and dallied and yielded, and lost much precious time, and won a load of guilt, whose weary burden we have borne till now. There, from that dark thicket which borders the path, sprang the tiger Wrath to our bosom; and we bade him welcome, and hied him on to that fierce quest in which we hunted human life. It may be, God disappointed us, and hid the prey from our eyes; it may be, our hands are red to-day with the stains of murder! There joined us Avarice, with Stealth and Rapacity led in leash by his side; and we suffered him to bear us company till our hands were polluted with his spoils, and our souls stained with his wrongs. And the bribes! They are on us to-day, and the wrongs are unrepented to-night. There, again, we stopped and danced away, in Folly's maze, the precious hours which were charged with our immortal destiny; and they are lost to us forever, with all their treasures of opportunity. We shall miss them when we come to die; we shall miss

them when we come to render to God our account for time. There, again, we turned aside to water with our tears a new-made grave, whose envious mold shut forever from our longing eyes on earth the form of a child, a parent, a companion, a friend. O! there, by the grave of our beloved dead, we knelt, with passionate tears and cries wrung from our heart's deep anguish, and gave ourselves to God. The earth is yet fresh and rounded where they lie, and we have forgotten them and our vow. Or, it may be, we have remembered both; and while the tears will come to our eyes, as these sad fountains of grief are touched by the wand of Memory, they are tears of joy and hope, not less than of sorrow and regret. All this we see in the valley which lies between us and one year ago. We have looked upon the past, — its faults, follies, sins, and griefs. Let us turn now to the future.

Before us lies the valley of another year. It is covered with a dense mist, which shrouds every object from our sight. We know not, we cannot know, what lies within that vale. It may hide our joy or sorrow, our loss or gain, our vice or virtue, our innocence or crime. It may be but a few steps before us, concealed from our eyes, it hides our own graves, or the graves of others dearer to us than ourselves. In vain we peer eagerly forward with our whole heart in our eyes. Our startled souls cannot pierce the misty future. It is a dark, frowning, and uncertain path. It abounds with deadly perils and heart-breaking woes. *Must* we tread this dark, uncertain, dangerous way alone?



Is there no guide, no clew, no help, no hope? Is God's frail human child thus abandoned in the dark by its divine Father? Nay, nay; He sends One to its relief who has trodden every step of the perilous road; who has felt its every sorrow pierce his own bosom; who knows every danger of the way, and is able to guard and shield from all; who loves God's human child with a love stronger than death; its elder Brother, too,—bone of its bone, flesh of its flesh, blood of its blood, heart of its heart, soul of its soul; with divine love and power, mingled with human sympathy and tenderness, to qualify him for the office of Guide and Saviour,—Him hath God the Father sent to take us lovingly by the hand and lead us, past all the toil and grief and danger, up to the Celestial Heights, whence, looking back, our whole earthly course will lie open to our vision, and our whole immortal future shall hide from our hopes only their supernal fruition.

Our errors, sins, follies, and sufferings in the past have all arisen from the want of such a Guide; and this want has been the effect of our own sad error. Years ago, in childhood, the Good Shepherd came to our side and solicited our confidence,—would have borne us in his arms past every deadly harm which has since wreaked its anguish on our hearts; but we would not. We thought that we could do without the Saviour in our childhood, and we turned away and strove to walk alone; but, at the first step, we stumbled and fell, and lost our innocence, and have never been able

to find it again, though we have sought it often and long, and regretted it with bitter tears.

And again, in youth, came to us the Heavenly Guide, with his sad, reproachful eyes, and warned and entreated us, by our lost innocence, and the deadly perils which lay in our path, and the fulfillment of our youth's bright promise, and our hope of happiness and heaven, to accept of his kindly services, and suffer him to direct our steps; but still, again, we would not. We exulted in our youth, we reveled in our untried powers. We wanted adventure, peril, worldly pleasure; and we felt sure, if we followed Christ, that He would guide us far from these. So we sent Him grieved away, and started on our blind path alone. Alas! what serpent vices stung us, and we wear their poison yet. What devilish passions beset us, and we let them in! and they made hell in our hearts, and run wild riot there to-day. And we have been wretched and miserable and disappointed; and we have learned to look for evil rather than good; and thus bruised, and weary, and travel-stained, and desponding, we have reached the summit of another annual hill. And here, again, there meets us the sad and holy Presence of the Crucified! His head wet with the frozen dews of our earthly night, his eyes tearful with human sympathy, his hands and feet and side bleeding afresh as he draws near us, — He comes and stands by our side once more. Here, on this high point of time, they meet again, — our Saviour and our souls. It may be, they will meet no more till we

stand wrecked, ruined, lost, before his judgment bar. But He is here now. The shadow of his presence falls on every heart and thrills it. Speak to us, O Saviour! in that voice which called the dead to life, and quicken our dead hearts to hear and obey thee. Or let thy five bleeding wounds — “poor dumb mouths!” — plead with us till they shall prevail! For our own souls He pleads. Let us give them to Him, lest they die. Die! they have been dying all these years; and our sufferings were but the death-pangs of our spiritual nature. Are they fainter and fewer than of yore? Then are we the nearer dead, — the nearer damned! One more fall, and we shall rise no more. Let us haste to take the hand of this kindly and gentle Saviour, held out to some of us for the last time, and follow Him confidently through the dark and unknown future, — through the gloomy shadows of the valley of death, where his rod and staff shall comfort us, — till we come, at the last, to the gates of pearl, and see them lift up their everlasting heads, that we, with the King of Glory, may go in.

## VI.

### HUMAN SOVEREIGNTY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

“Sow to yourself in righteousness, reap in mercy.”—HOSEA x. 12.

THE great law of cause and effect runs through both the material and spiritual worlds ; with this difference, however, that, in the former, it is absolute, unconditional, and fatal ; while in the latter it is subject to many changes and fluctuations, owing to the introduction here of the almost infinitely subtile, ethereal, and incalculable spirit of subordinate and dependent moral agencies. Of these subordinate and dependent moral agencies we are acquainted, practically, with but a single species ; and that our own. True, we have information concerning the existence, habits, and some of the powers of others ; we have all heard of angels, and of devils ; and we have no rational doubt of their existence ; but we have never seen them, — never held sensible intercourse with them ; and our knowledge concerning them, on all points save their simple being, is defective.

With regard to ourselves, our native consciousness of moral freedom is confirmed by our whole experience and observation. Man's sphere of moral liberty is as certainly large as it is certainly not unlimited. He may interfere with and con-

trol many effects which proceed from the First Cause. The germ, which would otherwise produce a mighty oak, may be crushed by his foot, or plucked up by his hand, or burnt with fire, through his agency, and the original purpose of its creation he utterly subverted. The stream, which would otherwise have flowed on for centuries, or forever, in its accustomed channel, may be diverted from its course, and made to turn his mill, or waft his commerce by a nearer path to the sea.

The limit, however, of man's agency, in the material world, is easily defined. He soon comes to find things too hard for him. He may thwart or destroy a single natural effect of Divine Power; or a whole class of effects. He may even root out, from the globe, an entire species — human, brute, or vegetable. But he can neither produce the most minute nor control the mightiest. He may level or tunnel the mountain; but he cannot stop the mouth of the volcano. He may construct and fill with water an artificial pond or lake, or drain dry a natural one; but he can neither make nor mar an ocean. He may fence the rain from his hearth; but he cannot bid it fall upon his field. He may shelter himself from the tempest; but he can neither cause, control, nor measure its influence. All this is wisely ordered; that, feeling his freedom and power, and being tempted by that feeling to a wild and ungoverned license of action, he may feel, also, his impotence and dependence, and be restrained by this feeling within the limits of virtue and conservatism. All great laws and sud-

den \*changes are above him ; for he is the little child of a Divine Father, the lighter articles in whose earthly house are placed within his reach ; and he is free to use them as he will, in order to try his disposition and develop his character ; while the heavier furniture is beyond his strength, and the doors are opened and shut only by the Parent's hand.

But we said that the law of cause and effect extends to the spiritual world. Let us understand precisely how and how far. He who built the earth, and endued it with warm and kindly susceptibilities to the germs of vegetable life, ventured also, in his creative wisdom, on a sublime analogy in the spiritual world. He created the human mind, and endued it with like warm and kindly susceptibilities to the germs of moral and spiritual influence. Now, in this analogy, it is plain that the mind is the soil, and truth is the seed. A perception of truth, once deposited in the mind, can neither perish nor lie silent and inert. By a law of the spiritual nature, it must germinate, spring up, and produce a harvest of kindred perceptions ; and this without the choice and despite the intentions and even the efforts of the soul herself. It is a cause, which must produce its effect. The mind, it is true, by a voluntary effort, may be closed against the germinal perception — may refuse to receive it ; but once received it can neither destroy it, nor prevent its increase. Take, for an illustration, the simplest axiom in numerical science, that  $2+2=4$ . It is proposed to teach this

truth to one — no difference whether child or adult — utterly ignorant of the whole matter. Now it is plain that he may refuse to be taught; he may declare that he will learn, that he will know, nothing whatever on this subject. He has here the liberty of choice. But, if he once consent, and receive the proposition into his mind, is it not plain that there must spring from it a train of indefinitely various, though kindred perceptions?

Now truth, the seed of the soul-soil, is of two kinds: positive and moral. The example just given is that of a germinal perception of positive truth. With equal facility we may illustrate the effects of moral truth. A perception of the beauties of holiness, for example, is the perception of a good truth, because holiness is truly beautiful. A perception of the pleasures of sin, is the perception of an evil truth, because sin has, truly, some pleasures. To both these perceptions — which are of moral truth — the same law applies (with one difference, which we will presently remark), as in the case of positive truth. We may refuse them an entrance; but, once planted in the mind, they become prolific and indestructible causes of good or evil effects. And this rule does not — and herein consists the whole difference between positive and moral truth — this rule does not, as one might suppose at first, without much and careful thinking, leave us at the mercy of every passing word, thought, and suggestion of evil, which satanic hands have scattered, and are still busily strewing, through the world; any more than it leaves us the

helpless converts of the sermons which we hear, and the good influences which assail us on every hand. Man has guaranteed to him, anterior to both good and evil, a large liberty of choice. Himself, and not another, looking through the open port of attention, and marking the quality of the guests which seek admittance, — his own, and not another's hand, must open the barred avenues of the soul to the angelic or infernal convoy. If the simple sight, hearing, and knowledge of the right, made men good, none would be evil. If the simple sight, hearing, and knowledge of the wrong made men evil, none would be good. It is necessary that the heart receive, welcome, cherish, and brood over the germs of either good or evil, ere they quicken into celestial or infernal life. And in all this, the Heart may do as she freely will : nor God, nor circumstance, which is essential God ; nor devil, nor temptation, which is essential devil, shall constrain her ; for such is the law of human moral agency, and consequent responsibility.

But the other law, that of cause and effect, applies subsequently, and with rapidly increasing force, proportioned, always, to the number and quality of good or evil germs which are received into the mind, and made welcome by the heart. The ratio of increase, it is plain, in good or evil effects, from the implanted germ, must be in any given case indefinitely greater than the greatest results of seed-bearing in the vegetable world ; for this is the law of figurative application, and therefore had it been otherwise, the Holy Spirit could



not have used this particular metaphor: "*Sow in righteousness, reap in mercy.*"

What an astounding view is thus opened to us, of the effects, upon ourselves, of our own evil thoughts, desires, and tempers! We receive, and encourage to take root in our minds, a perception of the pleasures of sin; we meditate upon it; we brood over it; we steep it in the voluptuous waters of reverie; we sketch it in fanciful pictures; we weave it into imaginative creations; we gloat over it and nurse it; until this thought, like a vile and noxious weed, seizes upon all the unappropriated soil of the heart. Its rate of increase, with every passing day of our existence, is something fearful. At first, it was apparently a slight matter: duty seemed irksome and embarrassing, and repose pleasant; and we simply excused ourselves from the cross; or deception seemed slight, easy, and profitable, and we merely hid the truth; or appetite presented a pleasant, and as we thought, not very harmful attraction, and we ate and drank; or Impurity smiled and beckoned, and we yielded an incautious consent to what we were fully resolved should be but a moment's dalliance. The days ran on; but night and day, waking and sleeping, dreaming and doing, these seeds of evil have unfolded, fructified, and brought forth their harvests in our minds; which, falling back upon the same fruitful soil, have produced ten thousand other harvests; and these now cover every spot of the soul's surface with the rank, dark growth of sin; we are confirmed formalists

— nor God's Word nor Spirit can reach us — we nor care nor labor for the Church, nor for God, nor for souls ; and all this time we are wrapped in the beautiful garment of a seemly religious profession, and appear to men as in the embrace of the visible Church ; while in reality the vampire of hell is fanning us, with his horrid wings, to a deadlier repose, and draining, from our already insensible souls, the last precious drops of spiritual life : or, the first seed of falsehood grown to fraud, and avarice, and theft, and rapacity, behold us bankrupt of all principle, spurning all restraint, careless of all judgment, forgetful of all eternity, — hasting to hell ! or, Appetite, having borne its harvest in our lives, signals the red autumn of intemperance, by the daily-dropping fruits of revelry, riot, raving, blasphemy, cruelty, and crime : or Impurity has grown and multiplied, and, with devilish art, distilled her harvests into a foul, venomous, and lustful slime ; with which she has daubed, plastered, stained, polluted, and prostituted our highest and purest faculties, until we are almost too loathsome for the embrace of the devils !

True, these are extreme instances ; in which evil came unresisted and welcome to the heart, and remained there long without any effective opposition. In the greater number of souls, good and evil influences are more evenly balanced, and strive long together without such decided advantage to either party. But a decided superiority once obtained by the forces of the wrong, and the disproportion greatens with terrible rapidity. Every

moment the man ripens for hell. All the tropic forces of evil are glowing in his heart, and cover it with that rank luxuriance of sin, in which hide the monsters of spiritual prey. And so, in some black night or day, the man dies, and hell gets its own. But death has not altered him essentially. The mere accident of flesh apart, he is the same man in hell that he was on earth. He is simply wedded indissolubly to Sin. It is no longer a foul and obscene dalliance, but an eternal embrace. He is simply, all and forever, consecrated to evil. The last seedling germ of good has been choked from his heart, and he merely goes to the garner of infernal truth for more and deadlier seed of sin, that his future soul-harvests may be worthy of the sultry clime of Hell.

And this must go on forever! O, when we think of this "ineffable forever," and then remember how wretched our little sins have made us; and all of us, even the children of our day, can remember this; and how terribly our great sins have tortured us; and some of us, whose hearts still wear the uncured wounds of vice and crime, scarce cicatrized by the healing years, can remember even this; and when we do remember it, and compare it with the fiery harvests of that man on whose "sorrow-shriveled brow" the very years of perdition have lost themselves in the infinite: we can no longer feel surprise that the Holy Ghost, when He would tell us and warn us of this doom, could find no figures so appropriate as "the

fire that burneth forever and ever," and "the worm that dieth not."

Is any one shallow or foolish or uncandid enough to intimate, even to the partial tribunal of his own heart, that this doctrine abridges man's moral freedom? Though he deserves no answer, yet we will answer him by a simple analogy, which, however humble a style of argument, may touch the measure of his capacity. Is the moral liberty of the man who freely promises to pay his neighbor a thousand dollars — for what he esteems a good and valuable consideration, and with regard to whose worth and quality he is in no sense deceived — abridged by his obligation to comply with that promise? Ought he to repudiate that debt in order to be a free man? Nay, this is not freedom, but fraud; and we shrewdly suspect that these are the terms on which such men want moral liberty; and this is what they mean when they complain of a lack of it: they would be free to sell themselves to the devil during the term of their natural lives, and, after having received all his advances in the form of worldly pleasures, and spent them on their lusts, they would repudiate the bond when they come to die; but God is the Just Judge, who will see that even the devil has his due, and that the men who have freely sold themselves to Evil in this world shall be bound to her by adamant chains in the world to come.

And, as the devil furnishes man with abundant seed of evil, but cannot plant it, save by the free coöperative labors of the soul herself, so God fur-

nishes him with abundant seed of good, but will not plant it, except on the same condition. In untrammelled sovereignty of soul, he must himself elect between the good and evil seed. In the most important sense (which is always and everywhere the practical one), man is the sower of his own spiritual field. If he will, he may make his heart the harvest-ground of goodness and purity. He may admit, and welcome, and keep warm in his soul a perception of the beauties of holiness; he may ponder, meditate, and brood over it; he may steep it in the delicious influences of reverie; he may heat it with the fires of imagination, and adorn it with the hues of fancy; he may love it, cherish it, and gloat over it, until this thought shall prove to him a germ of almost infinite reproductive power. Its first effect will be a true and deep sense of the natural ugliness and deformity of sin; its second effect, a warm appreciation, ardent desire, and tender love for goodness. These two combined will produce again repentance unto life, or that act of fealty by which the Soul commits herself to God and good. The immediate and necessary effect of true repentance will be a true and saving faith, which, working by love, in the same divinely increasing ratio, will gradually but certainly purify the heart, and consecrate the whole life to virtue. The result will be one of those rare exhibitions of Christian usefulness which astonish the world, and gladden the Church, and turn many to righteousness, and shine in the hearts and memories of men, luminous as the stars forever and ever.

And when such a man dies and goes home to heaven, he is not another and different person, but the same. The merely accidental conditions of his being are alone changed. In all else, in all that is essential to his character, he is the same man there as here. The fertile soil of *his* heart, grown more capable as it grew more productive, has but exhausted the earthly supplies of spiritual truth, and gone to replenish itself at the heavenly garner. And there, always "sowing in righteousness," always "reaping in mercy," with the whole surface and substance of his soul-soil warmed and caressed by the unshadowed beams of divine love, and watered by the gentle dews of all spiritual influence, who can estimate the boundless richness of his heavenly produce?

And when we reflect that this will go on forever, in a perpetually increasing and rapidly accelerating proportion of power and effect; and when we remember what peace and happiness our trifling achievements in virtue have brought us, — and all of us, even the little children, can remember this, — and what joy and bliss have flowed from our larger successes in trying to be good; and some of us, who have been many years upon the way, and had a long and deep experience of God's love, may remember even this; and when we compare this with the happiness of that man who has been for untold ages and forever freed from sin and dedicated to virtue, — whose brow is glorious with the suns of the eternal years, and his soul warmed with the smile of an unveiled God: is it any mar-

vel that the Holy Ghost, when He would tell us and promise us these things, should talk of crowns of life, and thrones of glory, and harps of rejoicing, and trees and rivers of life, and golden streets, and diamond walls, and pearly gates, and all the hyperboles of glorious rapture and repose?

Therefore, "sow to yourselves in righteousness." Gather every precious seed of religious truth that falls within your sphere of life, from the all-provident hand of God, and plant it in your heart; and it shall as certainly bring forth fruit as God is true, and his immutable law of cause and effect cannot fail. Care you only for the planting; God is responsible for the harvest. Is evil in your heart? Sit not down, in helpless sadness, to mourn over it. Crowd it out with good! Let the dead past bury its dead; come thou and follow Christ. Truth, the seed, is ready to your hand; soul, the soil, is thirsting for your tillage. Hell is busy, and thus far, perhaps, you have consented with Hell against your own soul; but Heaven is ready, and to-day you may strike hands with God and the angels for your own rescue and redemption. Begin at once to sow the seed of good. Listen to the Gospel as you never listened before, with soul athirst, and heart and ear attent. Pray as you have not prayed before in years, if ever, in agony of spiritual hunger. Kneel at God's altar, and let the ordinances of God's house sink, germ-like, deep into the tender soil of your heart, softened by the tears of penitence. Then rise and go hence to a new life; a

life of prayer and faith, of cross-bearing and duty, of love and humility, of joy and peace; and in the day of death and judgment, at the grand harvest home of the universe, you shall "reap in mercy."



## VII.

### DOING GOD'S WILL.

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” — JOHN vii. 17.

IT was at the Feast of Tabernacles, in the Temple at Jerusalem, that Jesus uttered these words. The city was crowded with curious and excited men, agitated by conflicting opinions concerning the new doctrine; and desiring — some of them — to hear more of it; and others — by far the greater number — to silence its Teacher forever. These last had waited and watched and sought for Him, that they might arrest and slay Him. He had not accompanied his disciples to the Feast: alone and in secret He had come from Galilee; and suddenly appearing in the city and in the Temple, He calmly confronted the vast multitude of his enemies, and proceeded as usual to teach the people. “And the Jews marveled; saying how knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” Jesus answering, it is probable, as much to their thoughts as to their murmured words, responded, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. And now I am come to test your candor. Ye proclaim yourselves the peculiar people, the children, the friends of God; and ye profess to desire the

truth concerning me and my doctrine. I have here a proposition to make which will search your hearts : if any man among you all will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." This challenge from the lips of Christ, thrown broadly out to the unbelieving Jews and the unbelieving world, we offer in his name to-day to all who will accept it. Many of you profess an anxious desire to know the truth of those doctrines of experimental godliness taught by Christ. We would test the sincerity of such professions by the same means which He has employed ; and authorized by his example we submit to you this plain and simple proposition : If any man will do God's will he shall *know* of these doctrines whether they be Divine or human.

The condition has two members : first, if any man is *willing* to do God's will ; secondly, if any man actually *do* God's will. But if any man be willing to do God's will, he has a candid mind. He is not prepossessed by his own will or wisdom. He is not predetermined to have his own way. He does not imagine that he knows more than anybody else ; that he thinks better than anybody else. It is essential to candor that a man distrust his own candor. He must examine, rigidly, his heart and his head. He must see to it that his mind is not preoccupied with favorite theories of religion, — the patchwork of selfishness, philosophy, and education. He must subscribe, blindly and submissively, to no creed ; he must pin his faith to no church-sleeve, gowned or ungowned. The pure

Word of God must be his chief Counselor and his sole Arbiter, in deciding what is the Divine will. He must not allow any kind or degree of prejudice to harbor in his soul. There must be nothing in his mental habits, tastes, or sentiments, which prejudices these doctrines and revolts from their sway. He must absolutely dislike neither the doctrines themselves, their teachers, nor their ordinary and most humble exemplars. In particular, he must be careful that there be nothing in the denominational connection of their teachers, or the condition in life of their warmest professors, from which the sensitive fastidiousness of his mind turns away. In one word, he must be thoroughly open to conviction. His soul must be transparent as crystal to every ray of truth, and welcome it as warmly, and reflect it as brightly, as the diamond does the light. It must be plain to any understanding that, without this supreme and all-pervading candor of spirit, no man can be willing to do God's will; and that if he believe otherwise of himself, he is simply but deeply deceived.

If any man be willing to do God's will, he has, in the second place, an earnest desire to know what that will is. There must be in his mind not only no repugnancy to the truth; he must not only not dread it; he must not only not close his eyes and stop his ears, lest he should see and hear, in the truth, his own condemnation; but he must have a courageous desire to find out its quality and test himself by its light. His soul must wear no mask, no defensive armor. No kind or degree

of indifference to the knowledge of the truth, can consist with willingness to be governed by it. Not only must one open his mind and heart to receive it, he must earnestly and deeply desire it. He must hunger and thirst for it; for, truly, it is to him the bread and water of eternal life; and though the provision be ample, those who hunger not will not eat; those who thirst not will not drink. Nor will any consideration excuse him from personal effort to find out what is the will of God concerning him. Vigils, prayers, fastings, study, meditation, all must be invoked to guide him to the truth, and help him to apprehend it. Every motion of the soul must be in the direction of the truth; and every energy of the spirit must impel him toward it. The emotional fires must kindle and sustain a quenchless intellectual ardor. Body, intellect, and heart, must extend their common arms to embrace the truth. This earnest desire to know the will of God, expressed by the constant exertion of all the active powers to acquire that knowledge, the least reflection will convince us, is absolutely essential to willingness to be governed by it.

In the third place, if any man be willing to do God's will, he has a firm determination to do constantly and purely right. In other words, if he be willing to do God's will, it is the same thing as to say—dropping the auxiliary and changing the form, though neither the tense nor significance of the expression—he *wills* to do it. And this too intelligently; after mature reflection and severe

self-examination. In a word, he has made up his mind that he will do God's will at any cost; however it may cross his natural or habitual inclinations. He may have been a lover of pleasure; there may be a spirit of voluptuous sensuality in his soul, which rises up with burning answer to the appeals of beauty and the bowl; but he will exorcise that fiend or bind him; he will not be led by him. He may love his ease; he may have become so accustomed to the calm of domestic enjoyment that the clarion call of Duty pains his ear; no difference—it is a Divine call; and he will obey though it summon him to toil and conflict. However mortifying to his pride, he is still resolved to do the will of God. He may have fancied himself endowed with intellectual faculties superior to those of most men; he may have cultivated them to the last possible degree, and believed himself qualified to wrestle, triumphantly, with the strongest problems of life; but thrown and humbled by the giant Future, he kneels submissively to God. He may have indulged in the amiable weakness of family pride, and have thought that the unpopular duties of evangelical godliness would render him a disgraceful exception to the stately self-sufficiency of his kindred: no difference still—he will incur the disgrace and humiliation of worshipping his Maker. He may have held—may still hold—a high social position, and may have felt deep reluctance to prostrate his lofty rank to those humble places where the Christian kneels and labors and prays; it matters not—he will do it—he *will* do it!

though the whole social world around him should open its eyes as widely as the laws of fashionable astonishment will permit. He will do the will of God, however apparently injurious to his interest. Though it seem to demand the sacrifice of all his property, he will make it ; for the pearl of Heaven is more precious, in his eyes, than all the gold of earth. Though it seem to incur the contempt of all his friends, he will risk it ; for God's approval, he feels, is better than the praise of men. Though it seem to call for the sacrifice of his heart's idol, he will not hesitate, for God is able to recompense him ; and who can tell, when the costly offering is bound and laid upon the altar, and the sacrificial knife uplifted, but some heaven-sent angel may interpose, and give him back his love, in reward of his obedience. Though it seem to require health and even life itself, he is ready for the last test ; for the tainted air may be purified by an invisible spirit, and the lions which seem to forbid his progress may be held back by a viewless chain. And even if it were not so he has learned that "wisdom which cometh from above," that it is better to die in the path of duty, than live to desert it. Thus, if any man be *willing* to do God's will, he has made up his mind to serve Him at all hazards and to the end of life.

And this brings us to the second member of the condition : if any man actually *do* God's will. But if any man, who has not been accustomed to do the will of God, would now begin to do it, how shall he commence ? What is the first step ? and how

shall the uninitiated and unprepared learn to take it? Just there we err. The sinner is not unprepared to do the will of God; otherwise he would not be responsible for failing to do it; since no man can prepare himself for this work; and the want of preparation would therefore operate to free him forever both from duty and accountability. Hence every sinner is rendered, independently of his own choice and agency, capable of doing God's will; or we must take refuge in the blasphemy, that God trifles with him when he enjoins it. There is no other alternative; and from this every sober mind will shrink with horror. We are therefore rationally shut up to the conclusion that salvation is practicable to every man; that he has both the power to will and the power to do God's will, — not originally, in and of himself, but derived from God, through the sacrifice of Christ: in other words, that the Atonement is sufficient for the wants of the race; or God would not have testified of Christ that "He died for all;" and that it is efficient in preparing all men to do the will of God; or He would not have commanded "all men everywhere" to do it. But what is it? What is the first duty of a sinful man who sets out actually to do the will of God? Obviously repentance. But can a man — any man — repent whenever he desires to do so? Are not the worst hearts visited by good desires? by fine, generous, and even pure aspirations? All this is true; and yet we reply that any man who wishes to repent can do so. "But," you say, "why then does he not

do it?" He must answer the question for himself; but neither his failure to act, nor mine to answer, implies any want of ability on his part to repent. How many things do we desire, in a sentimental sort of way, which lie within easy reach of our natural ability to possess, and which yet we never obtain? The reason: we have not obtained our own full consent; we are not willing to make the effort, or expend the money, necessary to obtain them. And if any one should gravely insist that, because of this unwillingness on our part, it was absolutely impossible for us ever to possess these trifles, should we not laugh at him? So with the sinner who desires salvation, and yet does not obtain it. He has not yet gained his own consent to seek it; and if, on this account, you gravely conclude that it is impossible for him — though he may desire, in order to escape responsibility, to agree with you — yet Consciousness, all the time, laughs at your reasoning and his illusion. Whoever then will do the will of God, let him repent. But we do not maintain the absurdity that he can perfect the work of repentance in a moment. He has descended, step by step, into the foul, dark caverns of sin; and no one convulsive bound — no spasm of desire for light and purity — will bring him to the upper air again. But one thing he can do: he can turn about and endeavor, honestly and carefully, to retrace his steps. In a word, he must repent as well as he can. Something he can do: let him do that something. But again, what is it? What is the first duty of the man who would do



the will of God? We answer, to stop and *think*. Let him reflect, calmly and deeply and patiently. Let him ask himself whither he is tending, and what will be the end of his progress. Let him dwell upon the several steps of that awful traverse by which he has reached the region of guilty darkness where he now stands. Let him think upon his sins. Let him open the long-closed and dimly-lighted chambers of Memory. Let him dare to look upon the treasures of sin which the labors of his whole life have accumulated. Let him estimate their number and their importance. Let him stand alone — *alone* — with his eyes opened upon the crimes of his life. Let him think of his innocence lost; of his conscience seared; of his God insulted and defied. And patiently thinking thus, his heart will grow very sad; and tears will come unbidden to his eyes, — *his* eyes, who thought and said that he could not weep, — and ere he is well aware of what is taking place, the gentle rain of a “godly sorrow” for sin will be sweeping, with hallowing power, over his long parched and thirsting heart. He will find it possible to be sorry for his sins. He will no more complain of a want of feeling and sensibility. Let him continue to ponder, and the burden of his sins will grow terrible. He will feel himself chained as to a “body of death.” A sense of awful oppression will pervade his soul. Intense hatred of his sin and loathing of himself will take firm possession of his mind. He will see — he will feel — “*the exceeding sinfulness of sin.*” In the midst of his anguish, he

will look around for some relief, some means of freeing himself from his burden. Nothing is there; nothing but the loathed sight and sense of sin. Self-despair — despair of all human help — closes darkly around him; until, from the depths of his unutterable wretchedness, rises that cry of agony which erst, so many hundred years ago, burst from the lips of one dark, crime-stained man, who stood afar off, and did not dare so much as to lift up his eyes unto heaven, “God! be merciful to me a sinner!” and for the first time in his life, since he left behind him the happy, golden gates of childish innocence, the man has *prayed!*

But to render this experiment completely successful, one must do all the will of God. His next important duty will be *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, since this is expressly enjoined, and is the great condition of justification. With regard to his ability to perform this duty, the same course of argument which we have followed in connection with repentance, will conduct us to the corresponding conclusion that God prepares the soul — every soul — for faith, by imparting to it spiritual faculties capable of apprehending faith's great object, and so quickening those faculties that their exercise is simply a matter of choice with their possessor, who is, in consequence, responsible for failing to use them, and condemned if he does not believe. Therefore, if any man will do God's will, he must have faith in Christ; for this is the will of God concerning all men, that they believe in the name of his only-begotten Son. But how shall a man

begin to believe? What are the several steps of that progress by which humanity may approach and embrace Divinity in the person of its Saviour? These are difficult to define, because the process is not merely intellectual, but also moral and spiritual; containing a combination and commingling of elements which escape the cold analysis of the understanding. But what is sufficiently evident is, that he who would do the will of God can and must believe that Christ is the only and all-sufficient Saviour of men. Let him take God's word for this, since He has condescended to pledge it to this effect. Let him, then, on the same divine authority, take the truth that, while Christ is the Saviour of all men, so far as to redeem them from the curse of Adam's transgression, He is only completely and specially the Saviour of them that believe on Him. Let him believe that God can be just, and yet the Justifier of any ungodly man that believes in Jesus Christ. Let him believe that salvation is practicable for *him*; that God, in consideration of the Atonement, is able and willing to justify him. Let him believe that "*now* is the accepted time." And, finally, let him believe that God does, in this present moment of time, while he is calling on Him for mercy, — because of Christ's sacrifice and intercession, and his own penitent faith, — have mercy on him and pardon all his sins; and according to his faith it shall be done unto him. Standing thus, in spirit, before the Cross of Christ, and gazing, by faith, upon the sacrifice which that holy emblem types, just there

a miracle is wrought! God says, "I forgive." No human ear hears the words; they are deeply in-spoken to his soul. God says, "I forgive," and his burden falls. There is no longer any weight upon his heart, upon his conscience. "Being justified by faith," he has "peace with God." More: in that same instant the wing of the infinite Spirit hath flashed from heaven to earth, and its burning and hallowing touch has purified his nature! He is no longer the same man; for the whole spirit of his sentiments, not less than the whole garb of his habits, is changed. He is "a new creature in Christ Jesus."

"But," you say, "how unreasonable! how unphilosophical is all this! You bid the man believe, as if his understanding and judgment were not involved in the matter. You make faith a mere exercise of the will, as if it did not depend entirely upon evidence." No, it does not depend alone on evidence; nor do we make it to depend merely on the will. The truth is, that both are equally concerned, — evidence, and the disposition to embrace it. But here is no lack of evidence. On the contrary, the very strongest of which the case admits, and the highest which human faculties are capable of apprehending, is here afforded, — the word of God, and the assurance that "it is impossible for God to lie."

But one who does the will of God, after being justified, lives as purely and usefully as possible. We say as possible, for he is yet but a "babe in Christ," and his spiritual powers are limited.

There comes a long and weary contest with the vicious habits which he contracted while an impenitent man, and with the tendency to inordinateness and license, which inheres in all the desires and passions of his nature, but newly subjugated to Christ. Then, too, he is just starting upon a new career, and mistakes are inevitable. He is undertaking an unwonted toil, and his hands are unskillful. These circumstances will limit, for a time, his efficiency, but it will gradually and steadily enlarge ; and, in the mean time, he is responsible but for his actual powers and circumstances. God is not a harsh judge to the infant Christian, but a tender and loving Father. Some of us have five or six children in our homes, and we assign them tasks adapted to the age and strength of each. Suppose, on a day, that we send them all for wood ; and while the big boy who heads our little company makes light of his heavy load, and the others come laden well, each according to his strength, the youngest of all, the baby, just able to walk alone, comes staggering under the burden of a single little stick ! Then which one, of all the group, do we clasp in our arms and caress and praise ? “ *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.* ” We repeat and emphasize, God does not want any man to repent any better than he can ; God does not want him to believe any better than he can ; God does not want him to live any more purely and usefully than he can. Failures and errors, therefore, while they occasion mortification, need not bring discouragement or condemnation.

And thus repenting, believing, and living for God, "he shall know of the doctrine" of repentance that it is altogether reasonable. It shall present itself to his understanding with the distinctness, and with something even of the glory, of a revelation from Heaven. He shall see and feel how utterly impossible salvation must always have been to him without the penitence which made him its willing subject; and, seeing this, he will be able to comprehend how wisely as well as mercifully, in compassion to the infirmities of the human understanding, the Infinite Mind has revealed to man this first round in the only ladder that leads from a sinful earth to a sinless Heaven. He will wonder that he could ever have had any difficulties about the doctrine of repentance. Above all, its perfect adaptation as a means to an end, of which he has just made so successful an experiment; its essentialness to that end, being the only means in the universe which could have accomplished it, and the ray of heavenly light which perpetually points to it, — all shall conspire to convince him of the divine origin of this doctrine so firmly, that time nor chance nor change nor life nor death can ever shake his confidence.

Thus repenting and believing and living for God, "he shall know of the doctrine" of *faith*, as the instrumental condition of man's justification, that it is divine. Never, till he believed unto life, was he able to apprehend the influence of faith upon character. Never before did he realize the truth that a man is, spiritually, as his faith. This

opens to him the whole philosophy of human nature as it is connected with God's plan of salvation. He may not be able to expound it ; he may have no terms in which to set it forth ; for lack of mental training he may not be equal to the task of explaining himself ; but he sees, feels, *knows* ; and half the wild joy which he expresses by shouts of rapture, is attributable to this prospect of truth which has opened, like the vision of a new world, upon his soul. Let a man once exercise that faith in Christ which brings salvation, and he will recognize, infallibly, the divinity of the Voice which bade him believe.

Still repenting and believing and living for God, he shall know, of the doctrines of human purity and spiritual endowment taught by Christ, that they are altogether divine, and such as perfectly meet the wants of humanity, both in its individual and collective forms. He shall understand the force and fullness of those deep words of the Master, which fell from his lips but a moment before the Heavens received Him : " Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." As he goes on conquering, one after another, every evil temper and passion and inclination of his soul ; as larger and fuller measures of grace and blessing are poured into his heart ; as deeper and wider and more permanent efficiency accompanies his efforts for the glory of God in the welfare of man, till the last evil guest is banished from his heart ; till God the Father, Son, and Spirit dwell in him ; till his very tones and ges-

tures are redolent of spiritual power, and set on fire the hearts of men,—then, O then, he shall know, of all these doctrines, their divinity, power, and preciousness: their divinity, because God's own voice testifies of it to his soul's interior sense; their power, because his own redeemed nature is at once its witness, and its fine and capable engine; their preciousness, because the joys of Heaven have come down to earth, and nestled in his heart, and given him a foretaste of that "pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," and of the fruits of that "tree of life" whose "leaves" are "for the healing of the nations."

"He shall *know*." O, the blessed calm, the grateful rest, of full assurance! No more vague conjectures, no more wild imaginings, no more vain reasonings, no more anxious investigations for the truth; he shall *know* it. No more painful uncertainty, no more tormenting doubt, no more dim and fading hope of personal acceptance; he shall *know* it. He shall KNOW! he shall KNOW! The difference is greater between the privileges of such knowledge and the pains of sinful ignorance, than that between the blind and the seeing. The mass of men are satisfied to wander darkly through a world of light, groping in trembling uncertainty, leaning on the frail staff of human opinion, and led by some pet creed; while only here and there a soul, content to *do* the will of God, feels upon his spiritual vision the unsealing finger of Omnipotence, and revels in the glorious beauty of a new and splendid life.



We have thus thrown down the gauntlet. The blood-stained glove of the Man of Calvary lies in the lists of life before you! Who dare take it up? In his name and in his words we challenge its acceptance: "If any man will *do*, he shall *know*."

Do *we* know? we who profess to know, *do* we know? Is our faith clear as vision, and strong enough to bring the invisible in sight, and clothe us with "power from on high?" If not, it is because we have not done, because we are not willing to do, the will of God. So do the blind lead the blind, and both together fall into the ditch of sinful error.

## VIII.

### THE MYSTERIES OF THE FUTURE STATE.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”—1 JOHN iii. 2.

WHILE obviously, in the text, directing the thoughts and hopes of believers in the Christian faith to the powers, privileges, and joys of another world, this Apostle will not have them to misapprehend the condition on which alone those beatitudes may be realized, nor suffer others, disqualified by essential character, to misappropriate the splendid promise which he unfolds. His “we” undoubtedly includes all believers, but not all who fancy themselves believers; not all who say “Lord, Lord;” but only those who are *now* the sons of God.” By sonship to God, on the part of any human agent, there is implied a Divine act of adoption; by which the relations of the natural child of evil were changed, and he became the child of God. But the child of evil *is* evil; the son of sin is *sinful*; the natural offspring of the devil, begotten upon the fallen bride of God, bears his father’s likeness; and such a being, evil, sinful, and devilish, God could not love, and therefore could not adopt for his own child. Therefore, the fact of adoption in a particular instance being

granted, there is necessarily implied an essential change in the nature of its subject. . From having been evil in all his dispositions, he must become good in all his dispositions. This change is termed by Christ a new birth; evidently because of its strong resemblance, not in physical features and conditions, but in the purer analogies of spiritual endowment, to the natural birth of a human being. As such a being bears, from his natural birth, the parent stamp of evil, so the same being, begotten of God, through the Holy Ghost, bears, from his spiritual birth, the features of his Divine Parentage, in desires, affections, and purposes of goodness. But God's election of certain moral agents, in the human world, to become, by this new birth and adoption, his children, is not unconditional, blind, and fatal. This is the saddest, because the most mischievous, of all theological errors. It confounds all the distinctions between right and wrong, paralyzes the spiritual energies of man, and degrades the Almighty from his natural rank of a just and holy Monarch, to a fond, stern, ruthless, or eccentric tyrant. "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." "The righteous shall surely live." "Whosoever cometh, I will, in no wise, cast out." "And whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." This is the Scriptural doctrine of election, as well as the rational one. No other can be found in the Scriptures, as no other can be tolerated by sound reason. Upon the human will, enfranchised by the preventing grace of Christ, God has devolved the

responsibility of a free election of either good or evil, for its earthly and perpetual portion ; and accordingly its choice of good is rewarded by a personal Divine election and adoption, and its choice of evil punished by a personal Divine reprobation. If, thus, with the unreluctant voice of our whole being, we have chosen good and consecrated our lives to its service, we are converted, justified, born again ; and “*now* are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is.”

“It doth not yet *appear* what we shall be.” The conditions of the saint’s glorious immortality are not evident, apparent, in the present life. They have Divine assurance that it shall be girt with superhuman splendors. Thrones and crowns, and golden harps and angel songs, and starry gems, and crystal waters, and trees and rivers of life, and emerald fields and purple-glorious fruits, and robes of purity and sceptres of power, flash and gleam and sparkle, through the thrilling pages of the Revelator ; but really, when we sum up the results, when we question and analyze, when we would arrange and combine, and so furnish forth, in all its lovely magnificence, the temple of our future being, we discover, with a pained surprise, that we have really no materials for such a finished picture. “It doth not yet *appear* what we shall be.”

And yet, the substance of that dimly-sketch-

future is already ours ; for “ we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is.” A German writer has said, “ The eye sees only what it can see ; ” by which he intends to convey the great and little-apprehended truth, that the power of any sense is limited by the mental capacity of its owner. The idiot, for example, may be possessed of a keener vision than the man of sense ; he may be able to discern the same object from a greater distance than the other ; and yet, both regarding the same near scene, the one shall perceive nothing, — shall positively gaze on vacancy ; while the other shall see demonstrated a problem in Euclid ; the difference being not in the visual organ, in which the idiot has the advantage, but in the informing mind, which opens the eye to the perception of truth. Hence, again, two eye-witnesses of the same occurrence (say, a deadly personal combat), standing side by side, and both looking on, from its angry commencement to its bloody conclusion, will yet, when brought into court to testify, give materially different, and frequently positively conflicting, accounts of the affray. And this, from no lack of candor, or defect of memory. The same eyes, from the same stand-point, it is true, see mechanically the same things ; but the one gazes on vacancy in effect ; while, to the better-informed mind of the other, that action is performed, upon whose sinister or kindly significance turns the whole question of guilt or innocence. The well-informed and thoughtful counsel understands this principle well ;

and avails himself of it, if a great lawyer, to further the ends of justice; if a little man, to secure a transient success, or win a splendid fee.

Now, behind this plain and apparent law of perception, there slumbers, unawakened by the grasp of the world's intellect, a profounder truth, a Diviner philosophy. God's grand Apostle of Humanity, the loving and beloved John, searching through all the arcana of affection, had found, and with caressing hand had touched and waked it; and its glorious eyes had smiled all their tender wisdom into his soul. And this starry truth, won from the depths of Christian contemplation, he utters, in the simple great words, "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." To apprehend a Being of holiness and might, is to be ourselves robed with purity and girt with power. He who saw Christ, and understood his mission, became Christ-like, even on earth. The conformity, in each individual instance, was measured by the fidelity of the conception to the true nature and offices of the Being conceived: hence the difference in Christian attainments, spirituality, piety, power; hence, also, that faint perception of the Beautiful and True, which glassed itself, for a moment, in fickle and sensual minds, soon faded, and was replaced by worldly images. Now, but one point was necessary to be known, in order to measure the possible attainments of Christians both in this world and the future; and that was, whether a perfectly faithful apprehension of the character of Christ were possible to his followers, either here

or hereafter. Of course we speak of his *human* character: his Divine nature, the infinite Sea in which all being rolls, none of its denizens could hope to fathom or bound. With regard to the possibility of such a conception of Christ, on the part of Christians, as would absolutely conform them to his image on earth, we have no direct testimony in the Scriptures. A great many inconsistent enthusiasts have maintained it; and some good and great men have agreed with them. Yet the weight of evidence and reason seems against it. Christ was "without sin;" and men, on earth, though followers, lovers, and servants of Christ, have yet been sinners, both by nature and habit. The body, the intellect, the heart, the conscience, and the will, have all been, for years, at war with good. Admit that, in conversion, man becomes, essentially, a new creature; yet the newness is certainly not of the body, nor of the intellect, nor of the merely human emotions. Appetite, propensity, and all the physical effects of sin, remain. Nor memory, nor imagination, is purged of its olden stains. A thousand pictures of attractive evil are graven deeply on the one; a thousand images of wanton sin float wildly through the other. Habit reasserts its ancient power; though it may not subjugate the Soul, and will not, if the Soul be true to herself. Still, the woof of sin has been woven into the warp of life, and not, it would seem, until life's last thread is unraveled, can it be wholly freed from that malign influence. In still further confirmation of this view, we have the

fact that no patriarch, prophet, or apostle ever claimed such a high attainment; but, upon the contrary, many have expressly disclaimed it: as Job, when he said, "Though I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me;" and as David, when he said, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness;" evidently alluding to a period subsequent to the sleep of death; and as St. Paul, when he said, "Not as though I had already attained, or were yet perfect." And finally, we have the strong circumstance, that this state of absolute and perfect conformity to the likeness of Christ is held up, as by the Apostle in the text, as the great and distinctive privilege of the saints in glory; a circumstance which would seem positively to forbid, to sober-minded persons, the opposite view of the subject.

Such a complete likeness to the humanity of Christ is then possible, to the Christian, in another life; when the worn-out shreds of his earthly existence shall quicken, under the Master hand, into an organism of ideal and purely spiritual powers. But to transform this glowing possibility into a glorious certainty, there was needed, first, a Divine revelation of the truth, clearly undiscoverable by unaided human powers, that such full and perfect apprehension of the human Son of God would be the grand condition of the Christian's immortal life; and this assurance we have, from the lips of the Holy Ghost, in the text: "We shall see Him



as He is." These words open to the transforming eye of Faith his inner and essential nature. "We shall see Him as He is." Not as He seemed to us on earth; not as He seems to the angels in heaven; not as He will seem to all other sentient beings, in the universe, forever; for *they* have no kinship with Him, and *we* have. We, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood, heart of his heart, thought of his thought, soul of his soul, essence of his humanity, — "We shall see Him as He is."

But there was needed, secondly, to render the problem of our future likeness to Christ a transporting certainty, a knowledge, unknown to the schools; a philosophy, never taught by the philosophers of earth; a chemistry, whose elements are spiritual, and whose subtile changes no weird alchemist had ever tested; and this first-rate truth of immortal science is lifted, by the strong hands of the Apostle, to the light even of our dull and clumsy apprehension, and displayed in the magic words, "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

It is worthy of remark, in this connection, that the particular era in our existence at which this wonderful quickening of our powers of apprehension, and this mighty change in the qualities of our nature, shall take place, is distinctly marked in the text: "*when* He shall appear." Now, there are two future appearances of Christ, to which reference is frequently made in the New Testament Scriptures. The first is great, terrible, and single; when He shall come, in the clouds of

heaven, with his Father and the holy angels, to judge the world, in righteousness, and every eye shall see Him; the other when, at the hour of each individual saint's death, He shall appear to claim his own. In deciding the question, to which of these distinct appearances the Apostle refers in the text, we have only to remember that he speaks of that which concerns alone "the sons of God," and not of that which is common to "every eye;" and we have thus clearly indicated the hour of each Christian's death, as that in which he shall "see Christ as He is, and be like Him."

As to the points of that likeness, we shall be like Him, first, in the physical conditions of our immortal being. And just here we will remark that, in our pursuit of the features of this likeness, we would substitute imagination by analysis, fancy by fact, and reverie by reason. The picture which results may be less charming, but will, to sober minds, be more attractive; may be less dazzling, but will, on this account, as seen the more distinctly, linger the longer on the canvas of the mind. The rational basis of our future human likeness to Christ is, our common participation with Him in all the attributes of humanity. Whatever is predicable of humanity is predicable of Christ's humanity; and whatever is predicable of Christ's humanity is predicable of our own. If, then, by a cold and rigid analysis, we discover, among the existing conditions of our nature, any which are essential, of these we may safely say that they can never pass away, and that they will form constitu-

ents of Christ's glorified humanity, and therefore of our own. And we are encouraged to pursue this line of thought by the reflection that whatever has no essential properties, is essentially nothing. An accidental organism is a contradiction in terms. If, then, human nature be something, it has essential qualities ; and a little patient search will show us where they lurk and in what they consist.

One of its essential qualities is certainly a physical organism. Jesus Christ had a human physical organism, and bore it with Him, through the star-gates of the Infinite, to his throne in Glory. What changes passed upon it, ere it was qualified to breathe the atmosphere of heaven, we cannot distinctly know. But we do know that they were great and marvelous, since flesh and blood are "corruptible," and "cannot," on the authority of Divine Revelation, "inherit the kingdom of God." Whatever these changes, they affected, save to beautify and glorify, neither form nor feature ; because, first, form and feature are of the essence of physical identity, and cannot be changed, in their essential verisimilitude, without destroying physical identity ; and because, secondly, his disciples saw and recognized Him by his physical form and features while He was in the act of ascending into heaven. Christ, then, preserves in heaven his physical identity ; and in this, "We shall be like Him."

Again, whatever was the nature of the change which passed upon Christ's body, it sufficed to deliver it forever from subjection to material laws.

Gravitation, for example, could no longer chain it to the earth. It became the pure and lofty vehicle of spirit. Wherever the mind willed, there the body wandered. Far-darting and ethereal as the spirit, it annihilated space and time, and inherited the freedom of the universe. Its eye saw beyond the stars. Its ear caught the melody of harps around the Eternal Throne. Its touch penetrated the essential qualities of all matter. Its senses inhaled the fragrance of the flowers of Paradise, drank the dews of immortal youth, and tasted the fruits of the tree of life. Heaven became its home, and the universe its play-ground. It might linger in the one or wander through the other. And all this pleasure and power were its physical possession forever. And in all this, "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

But Christ bore with Him to the Heavens, as an essential part of his humanity, a human intellect. Though superior in its powers to most men's, and readier in its functions, as that of a sinless being naturally would be, it was in nothing superhuman. Some things it knew, having acquired them, as other minds do, by industrious application. Of other things it was ignorant. "The Son knoweth not, but the Father," was his own modest confession of lack of knowledge. The infirmities of the flesh weighed upon his intellectual nature, as they weigh upon ours. The laws of his understanding were precisely those which define and subject ours. But these were of the flesh: its coarse appetites, its degrading feebleness, weighed

down the thought that would have soared, held back the intelligence that would have tracked Truth to the depths and heights of the Infinite. But with Christ's freedom from the flesh came the emancipation of his intellect from its wearying bondage. Henceforth, all lore was open to the eye, all science friendly to the curiosity of his mind. Over God's grand volume of the eternal ages past, where all fact and all philosophy combine to illustrate the truth, it might pore; or in the divine laboratory, whence grew the forming worlds, under the touch of infinite Skill; or, at ten thousand other founts, where knowledge ran like water, it might quench its thirst for truth, and so, through immortal ages, grow stronger in that wisdom which is the might of all intellect. And, in all this, "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

Again, our Saviour took with Him into heaven a nature all human in its emotions, sentiments, and affections. Every social longing which has ever thrilled a human breast with that strange pain the heart feels when it aches for sympathy and love, or with their wild excess, had its counterpart in his bosom. "He was tempted in all points like unto us, yet without sin." But, in all these things, his was a harder lot than falls to the saddest son of earth, whom, for his sorrows and disappointments, we term broken-hearted. Christ's human nature was more purely tender, more intensely loving, more lavish of its generous sympathies. And yet he was insulated by his strange

mission from all human ties. The Spirit warned Him continually that He had come to suffer and to die. Who could understand or sympathize with Him? He was solemnly, ineffably alone. Every exhibition even of maternal tenderness must have tortured while it thrilled Him, knowing as He did all the time that a sword "would pierce *her* heart," and that his hand was destined to hold it. To inflict pain on those who love us, and whom we love; pain, the necessity of which they cannot understand; and while their suffering eyes look reproachfully into ours; is there another pang on earth which so lacerates the tender heart? Play the surgeon for your own child, if you can. And Christ knew human friendship, — friendship so tender and true, that, when its object died, not all the strength of his grand nature could sustain, unmoved, the shock of that great grief. "Jesus wept!" Well might the Jews say, "Behold, how He loved him!" Loved him! It was the "loud voice" of his yearning soul that pierced the "dull, cold ear" of death, and brought him back to earth! And is it not told us, that Jesus loved this man's sisters, too? and especially her, we may infer, who sat at his feet, and learned all meekly the eternal truths which He came to teach? And who can measure this love? Who can say that the human heart of the Son of man thrilled not, as only human hearts can, under the power of woman's beauty, and purity, and truth? How else could the Apostle say of Him, "He was tempted, in all points, like unto us?" And if, indeed, it were so,

and He turned aside from the allurements of this fond human love, and the sweet vision of an earthly home which it presented, to walk onward, in his high and lonely path, to the Grand Agony, does it not help us to realize more truly and tenderly the sorrows which He bore for us? Now this warm, tender heart, with its loves and friendships, Christ took with Him into Glory. And there the heart, like the intellect, threw off its long earthly chain, and gave itself to love. There the tender mother could be comforted, by the presence, felt, though unseen, of her lost one. There, side by side with Friendship, and ever near the loved, might He linger, until, "like Him," freed by death from infirmity, they might join Him in the skies, and dwell with Him, in the bliss of unrestrained communion, forever. There, too, He would have fellowship with all saints and angels, and learn the mysteries of that sublime passion which fills the breast of God, and gave his Son, Himself, to die for a lost and guilty race. And, in all this, "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." If we have this Spirit, — if He dwell in our hearts, — we may comfort ourselves to-day with this splendid promise: "We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." If not, let us despair of ourselves, and seek earnestly the Spirit of adoption, that like precious comfort may be ours.

## IX.

### A VINDICATION OF THE DIVINE JUSTICE.

“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise, also, the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.”—1 TIM. v. 24, 25.

That inequalities, for which it is difficult to account, exist in the present life, is apparent to all; and they have led different minds to opposite conclusions. Some, looking only on the surface of things, have taken these inequalities in evidence that God maintains, over the world, no moral government. They see the innocent suffer, and they ask, Where is the Almighty Friend and Protector of innocence? They see the guilty escape, and they demand, Where is the retributive justice of Heaven? Let such persons be patient. The day of final judgment will reveal all they seek to know.

Others again, looking into the matter more deeply, and reasoning upon it more clearly, see in such inequalities nothing to shake their confidence in the goodness and justice of God, but upon the contrary much to confirm it. These things they regard as the legitimate effects of sin, with which God may not interfere directly and forcibly without seriously disturbing those principles of moral



agency and human probation upon which his government of the world is based.

“Some men’s sins are open beforehand,” says the text, and the meaning of this clause it first concerns us to ascertain. And for this purpose, let us consider the consequences of dissipation, vice, and crime to that class of men whose sins are open beforehand. One of the usual effects of dissipation on such persons is the loss of health. Some infirmity in their physical constitution forbids them to riot with impunity. Their intemperance is visited and punished by sickness. The wild excitement of pleasure is followed by the fiercer frenzy of pain. Every thrill of ecstasy is succeeded by a pang of anguish. And while these are at first only occasional, the frequency of excess soon renders them habitual. The confirmed profligate becomes at length a confirmed invalid; and the demon of disease poisons and embitters every cup of happiness which life can offer to his lip.

Equally fatal is the effect of dissipation upon their property. Though rich when they set out on this career, they soon become poor. They are singularly unfortunate in every adventure. Do they visit the gaming table? It is only to suffer loss. Do they associate with the dissolute and unprincipled? It is only to become the victims of their artifice. Do they embark in speculation? Their frail vessel is speedily wrecked among the rocks and quicksands of that treacherous sea. Every stake is a misfortune, every hazard a blow, under which their estate is rapidly and surely crumbling

away. Poverty, an almost invariable consequence on such a course of life, soon follows. Then all their illusions are dispelled. They awake. Their many friends are gone. Only the reality of their misery is around them, and the consciousness of their folly within.

Under the same baneful influence of dissipation, the mind of this class of persons is equally a sufferer with their body and estate. The discipline which might give it health and power is rejected as irksome. The temperance which could alone preserve the even balance of its faculties is a restraint to which they are unwilling to submit. The ascendancy is given up to the passions, by a course of life bearing about as much analogy to the useful and the true as a florid work of fiction sustains to the sober records of history. The fatal effect is soon apparent. The miserable victim of dissipation may turn and writhe, but he cannot escape. With a body enervated by luxury and racked by disease, with a fortune squandered in extravagance, he finds himself, in what ought to be the meridian of his life and the flower of his strength, destitute of the energy which should overcome the accumulated evils which he has brought upon himself, and of the fortitude which might rob them of their sting by a manly endurance.

Such are the effects of dissipation, as seen in the greater proportion of its victims, on that class of men whose sins are open beforehand. But, while dissipation renders them personally miserable, their vices make them socially despicable. By the re-

ligious, they are shunned as a moral contagion, whose touch is pollution, and whose embrace would be death. Their offenses against this class have been too numerous and too aggravated to be readily overlooked. What religious father would select a companion for his son from the ranks of the notoriously profligate? What pious mother would welcome such an one to the sacred precincts of her domestic circle? Pity him they may, pray for him they must, but they are under no obligation to take him to their home, or to treat him socially with anything save the contempt which his conduct merits.

But it is not alone in the eyes of the religious that these persons are despicable. The grave moralist bends on them his darkest frown. Nor ought this to be matter of surprise. They have wounded him in a more vital part. They have dealt sacrilegious blows at the structure upon which rest his hopes of happiness for the world to come. They have shocked his moral principles and wounded his moral feelings, and, of course, they are reprobate, according to all the terms of his code.

But what might seem really surprising is, that they are shunned by another class not less guilty, but more fortunate, than themselves. These are the fashionably dissolute, the genteelly vicious, the popularly criminal, who hide their vices under the garb of virtue, —

“Stealing the livery of heaven to serve the devil in.”

None are so merciless as these. None so quickly start and shudder at the bare recital of vice, and

so remorselessly persecute the unfortunate victims of its degrading influence. And why not? Their righteous souls are vexed with the stupidity of those poor fools who venture upon such a career without summoning to their aid the cardinal virtue of hypocrisy.

Thus met, by the religious, with a pity whose principal ingredient is the most degrading contempt; by the moralist, with a withering frown; and by the hypocrite, with the relentless venom of persecution: it is no wonder that these miserable wretches (whose misfortune it seems to be that their sins are open beforehand) are at last driven to crime. But here, again, the same dark destiny seems to pursue and overtake them. Speedy exposure and punishment follow. They reach the last round in the descent, only to learn that its name is infamy. They become the loathing of the world. Their blackened names are hung on high, as targets for the shafts of wit and malice; while their blackened bodies swing from the gibbet or fester in the felon's cell.

Such are the men whose "sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment." They seek pleasure in dissipation, and they find only pain. They seek excitement in vice; and they find, alas! too late, that its wages are degradation and disgrace. They turn in despair to crime, and behold! its reward is death.

"Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after." We conceive that reference is had, in the

latter clause, to a class of persons whose history, in the present life, is, in one respect at least, the reverse of all that we have just seen. *Their* sins, in a most emphatic sense, are *not* open beforehand. They plunge recklessly into the vortex of dissipation, and they come forth apparently unharmed. The shocks of intemperance seem to produce no effect upon their iron constitution. The wildest midnight revel cannot shake their nerves. The constitutional hardihood of such a man is his pride and his boast. He is the very prince of bumpers. His potations are ever longest and deepest. He never fails to conquer in that ignoble strife. In the haunts of dissipation you may behold him, the presiding deity of the bacchanalian orgie; and as his besotted companions, one after another, fall from the table, leaving him alone, his laugh of drunken triumph rings out upon the solemn night. But he dreams not that his laurels are gathered and woven of the nightshade of Hell, and that the hand that binds them on his brow leaves there a devil's brand. He recks not, if he know, that the honors of such a victory the Arch-fiend of perdition alone should covet.

In the matter of their property, also, the contrasting parallel holds good. Their losses are repaired by gains. Speculation pours its golden harvest at their feet. Prosperity sheds its brightest rays upon their heads. To use their own favorite phrase, they are lucky men. The gambler's hell — which as many an unfortunate wretch can attest is appropriately named — is to them a

sort of earthly heaven. There they pocket their golden winnings, and thence they ever come with a quick step and a light heart. Thus, in a pecuniary sense, their sins are not open beforehand. One of the usual consequences of dissipation, as the experience of hundreds of profligates proves, is loss of fortune. But the rule seems to suffer an exception in favor of the men we are describing.

Again, their minds do not appear to suffer. The mental constitution of these men seems to partake of the hardihood of the physical. They are as good accountants, as prudent advisers, as skillful practitioners when half-intoxicated as when perfectly sober. And so, with all their excesses, they continue strong. Middle age finds them, it is true, with nearly all the frolicsome temper of youth; but it also finds them with more than all the intellectual vigor of youth. But though, to all human appearance, neither health, fortune, nor mind be injured by dissipation, their career, when we regard it rightly, seems still a mournful and miserable one. They remind us of a strong ship, launched by an ignorant or careless hand among the breakers; where, though it is possible that she may long withstand the shocks which would speedily destroy a frailer bark, she must, in the end, inevitably go down.

But let us draw the line of distinction a little closer. Vice ought always to purchase, for its subject, the detestation of the community in which he lives; and it commonly does. But here again the rule seems to suffer an exception in favor of the

men whom we are now trying to describe. Their vices are winked at. "Little irregularities! Trifling peccadilloes! O, he means no harm by it! he is the best-hearted fellow in the world!" Such are the terms which serve to indicate their insults to the religious feelings and good order of society. It would seem that, from the crowd of their excusers and apologists, the professedly religious, at least, should stand firmly aloof. But we fear that this is not always — that it is not even generally — the case. And why not? Because of the liberality of these men. "He aids in supporting our minister: how can I offend him with the truth? He contributes largely — more largely, indeed, than many of its members of equal or superior pecuniary ability — to all the benevolent enterprises of my Church! How shall I go about to tell him of his sins? I fear he will not take it kindly." Thus they escape the censure of the good.

And the moralist is equally kind, on account of their public spirit. They are indeed, in one sense, valuable citizens. They are foremost in every enterprise looking to the improvement of the city, or the town, or the neighborhood in which they may happen to reside. If a road is to be constructed, they are among the heaviest stockholders. If a church or school edifice is to be erected, their names head the subscription list. And so, in every liberal, public-spirited movement, they are among the pioneers. They lead, they form public opinion. With all this, they are men of polished manners, and pleasant address. It is therefore not

so strange, that their neighbors cannot find it in their hearts to judge them rigorously.

Among the vulgarly vicious, of course they are popular. Their example is valuable. It is some consolation to the street drunkard who wallows in the gutter, and starves and beats his wife and children, that he can point, in seeming justification of his indulgence in this brutal propensity, to the genteel excesses of his wealthy and respectable neighbor. It is certainly pleasing to the depraved gambler, who has perhaps beggared and deserted a family, and sunk every generous and virtuous principle of his character in the gulf of his damning calling, that once in a while he is admitted into good society; for he reckons these popular gentlemen among his patrons, his intimates, his friends. It is doubtless a satisfaction to the loathsome wretch who has outraged every social and domestic relation; whom no tie of honor, or of nature, however sacred, can bind; whose foul foot has soiled, like a serpent's trail, every domestic hearthstone that it has ever pressed: that he has, before his eyes, so eminent an example of conjugal infidelity.

But let us proceed still further with the comparison. Let us suppose these popular gentlemen guilty of crimes — of crimes which bring them as culprits to the bar of their country's justice. The thing is, by no means impossible. Nay, it has often occurred. And with what result? Why, simply this: that the trial which ought to conclude with their just sentence of condemnation, is almost certain to end in their acquittal. Their position



screens them. The law is said to have a hard gripe ; but somehow it always touches the rich and great very tenderly. Their influence insures support. They are hedged in by their rank. They belong to a class always reluctant to witness the degradation of itself in one of its members. And besides, their money corrupts justice. That is the simple truth about it. O ! it is wonderful to tell, how eloquent is gold ! how it stirs up the heart's deep passions ! how feelingly it pleads ! what a world of pathos in its ring ! what a melting persuasiveness in its glitter ! And then, at the last, how convincingly it falls upon the palm ! Where is the iron judge that can sit unmoved under that appeal ? Where is the stoic jury whose hearts do not melt under its magic touch ? Strange, indeed, it would be, if the threefold power of rank, popularity, and gold could not purchase, for its favorites, the trifling immunity of crime.

The text continues : “ Likewise, also, the good works of some are manifest beforehand.” It will be seen, at once, that a class of persons, in all respects the converse of both those already described, is here indicated. Those were worldlings ; these are Christians. Those were the servants of Satan ; these are the children of the Heavenly King. To this class, as to the former two, we apply the test of real life and every-day observation, to illustrate the proposition of the text,—their good works are manifest beforehand.

Their virtues win esteem. Their piety is acknowledged and respected. They have the con

fidence of the community in which they live. The term, canting hypocrite, is never applied to them. And yet, beyond all question, they are men who honestly embrace the faith of the Gospel, and fervently and firmly maintain it; but they are exempted, for reasons best known to Him who reads all hearts, from the sterner tests of Christian fortitude. It may be that their trials are proportioned to their strength; that the light of virtue, which burns so brightly and so calmly in the smooth tenor of their lives, would go out, if it were exposed to the rough blasts of adversity and the fierce floods of persecution. We cannot tell. The cause is hidden; but the fact is apparent to all who observe and think.

Again, their benevolence is praised. They are men of feeling hearts and open hands. The prayers of many cottages call down blessings on their heads. In the hearts of many poor they have built themselves an altar, whereon Gratitude lays her morning and her evening sacrifices. The sails of the missionary ship which passes them are filled with a golden breeze. In their hands, the Word of God takes wing and flies to the uttermost parts of the earth. Every enterprise, looking to the moral, intellectual, or physical amelioration of the condition of their fellow-men, receives from them honest sympathy and effective coöperation. As a matter of course, these men are appreciated, and their praise is in all the churches.

As a consequence of this appreciation, their society is courted. They enjoy, to the full, all the

chaste and real pleasures of life. In their hours of relaxation they are surrounded by the intelligent, the gifted, and the beautiful. To them the world seems all sunshine, all flowers, all happiness. Socially, how enviable is their lot!

They succeed in life. Their industry secures affluence. Thousands of sunny acres wave for them a green, or white, or golden harvest. Many a stately edifice proclaims their enterprise. Many a proud ship is freighted with their merchandise. Money in hand, and stock in bank and public improvements, and all the means and appliances of wealth are theirs.

Their talents elevate them to office. In the Church they are considerable men, and deservedly so. They bring to her service willing hands, and experienced heads, and honest hearts. Envy trembles at the responsibilities of their high place, while she covets its honors; and if Conceit would climb to their side, and essays to do so, being blind, he almost always loses his foot-hold and falls to the ground.

And it does occasionally happen that, as citizens, they are not less valued than as churchmen. The suffrages of their friends call them to the occupancy of important and responsible stations in the civil government. Their names rank high in the political history of their country. And there are instances on record where individuals of the class we are describing have been called upon to lead their country's armies and to fight her battles; and an appeal to the God of Battles has justified

their appointment; and a grateful people has hailed them as their nation's deliverers, and delighted to do them honor; and their names have been handed down to posterity as synonyms for exalted piety and pure patriotism.

Now, we join not in the hue and cry so often raised against prosperous and popular men, merely because they are prosperous and popular. We are content to be governed by the wisdom of Jesus, — the wisdom which judges of the tree by its fruits, of the faith by the works. If, from some mountain side familiar to my eye, there gushes a crystal stream, whose course adown its side, and through the neighboring valley is garlanded with flowers, and compassed with life, and verdure, and freshness, and bloom, shall I not know, from these living and blooming witnesses, which everywhere begird its track, that its waters are pure, even though their source be hidden from my eye, deep in the flinty bosom of the rock? And so, when I see a human life, like that fair stream, taking through the meadows of Time the quiet tenor of its gentle way, while ever and anon, along its pathway there spring up the fair flowers of purity, and kindness, and temperance, and tenderness, and love, may I not know as well, from these generous tokens, that the source of that life is pure, even though hidden from all eyes deep in the inscrutable recesses of a human heart? We devoutly thank God that the Church has such men, and we wish that she had more of them, a thousand to one.

The text introduces to our notice still another

class. While the good works of these men are manifest beforehand, there are some "that are otherwise;" which means, simply, that their good works are not manifest beforehand.

Poverty not unfrequently hides real merit. One's honesty is often doubted, for no better reason than because he is poor; he is not pecuniarily responsible, he cannot make a good note. This, with many people, determines the fate of every application for their assistance. It is thought, if a man be not well-to-do in the world, that he ought to be; that it is his own fault if he is unfortunate and miserable. He must have been wanting in the cardinal virtues. He must have lacked industry, or economy, or honesty, or all three. At all events, he has no right to be wretched, and to parade his misery before us. So reasons the world: if a man be poor, he must, perforce, be dishonest.

Again, their benevolence is despised. They love the cause of God as well as the rich man, and they esteem it a privilege to contribute of their hard earnings for its support. But when they come forward with their humble offering, the rich man smiles. A very amiable smile, doubtless, he considers it, too; made up of some pride, a little pity, and a great deal of contempt. But O, it is galling to the poor man's soul! They listen to the claims of the missionary cause, or of some other benevolent enterprise, as they are advocated by one —

"Upon whose lip the mystic bee hath dropped the honey of persuasion;"

and they long to send out some bread, though it

be but a crumb, upon these waters, trusting in the promise of Scripture that they "shall find it after many days;" but they are deterred by a fear of the contempt with which their humble pittance will be received. Albeit, we might well remember how, in the olden time, when the people were casting their rich gifts into the treasury of the Temple, there came a poor widow and cast in two mites; and how there stood by One who said, "She hath given more than they all."

But what is still harder to bear, the poor Christian's piety is ridiculed. There are persons, calling themselves ladies and gentlemen, who, passing by the poor man's dwelling, can find matter for mockery in the tones and terms of his humble worship; who can even enter the house of God, and turn his prayers and praises into ridicule; who habitually sneer at all his religious exercises, and call him hypocrite, madman, and fanatic.

But, while in respect of his honesty, his benevolence, and his piety, the poor Christian is misunderstood, misrepresented, and scorned, he has yet sorer ills with which to contend. Misfortune blights his hopes, and makes perpetual war on all his prospects. He struggles long and desperately for comfort and competence. Sometimes he is partially successful. He gets something ahead. He begins to accumulate. He allows himself, at last, to hope. He dwells, with pleasant anticipations, on the decline of life. He thinks of the good time coming, and now near at hand, when, in his own home, and surrounded by his loved ones, he can

wait patiently for the Master's call. But some sudden and unlooked-for reverse sweeps away the purchase of his toil and self-denial, and leaves him again destitute.

In the midst of his discouragements, sickness comes to incapacitate him for further efforts. With a suffering family around him, he lies upon a bed of pain. And who can paint his feelings as he lies there, and gazes upon the scanty food and insufficient clothing of those dear and helpless ones for whom he is powerless to strike one stroke, but for whose sake he would gladly, if he could, coin into gold all

“The ruddy drops which visit his sad heart.”

But even here he does not murmur ; he is not quite comfortless ; for woman's heroic fortitude and childhood's trusting faith are with him still, in the tender offices of conjugal and filial love. He blesses God for these, and he is almost happy.

But a harder trial than all awaits him here. Affection's cheek grows pale. The eye of Love is getting dim and languid. The bounding step of Youth is losing its elasticity. A fearful guest is on his threshold, who never stops for welcome. It is Death — grim death — come to frighten, with ghastly brow, the last gleam of happiness from his hearth ! come to steal, with cold, skeleton hand, the last treasure from his home ! come to rend, with that resistless scythe he bears, the last fond links which bind the broken-hearted man to earth !

Next comes persecution to try his faith. He is slandered. Evil and unjust reports of his charac-

ter and acts are circulated. He is shunned by all his neighbors and acquaintances. His brethren of the Church even begin to doubt him. His minister looks on him with a coldly suspicious eye, and deems it hardly worth his while to pay him a pastoral visit. The old man is desolate, indeed!

Thus friendless and forsaken, he is an appropriate mark for all reckless, cruel, and unscrupulous wrong. The coarse and brutal jest with his misery, and rob him with a laugh. He struggles hard for a meagre subsistence; and even this is sometimes snatched, in wanton spite, from his hand.

To crown all, let us suppose him driven from his Church, from his home, compelled to wander as a mendicant from door to door, and subsist upon the crumbs which fall from the tables of the happy and prosperous, and, dying at last, it's only a pauper dead.

“ Then rattle his bones  
Over the stones:  
It's only a pauper whom nobody owns.”

Nobody owns? Nobody owns? —

“ Angel harps are ringing,  
Angel lips are singing  
Heavenly melodies:  
For him, the lowly born, —  
For him, the worldling's scorn;  
Hark! they rise!”

But our ears are too earthly dull to catch the notes of that celestial song. We hear nothing, we see nothing, only a pauper dead. Here the body of the dead saint is thrust carelessly under the turf by cold, official hands, and we pass on to our busi-



ness or our pleasure. Now, do not say "This is but a fancy sketch," for there have been in the world just such Christians ; and they have passed, from the outcasts of humanity and the compassion of brutes, to a home "in Abraham's bosom."

And why not? Shall the unhappy, unfortunate, suffering, and persecuted Christian, after a life of failure, die in misery and disgrace at last, and no reward follow his life-long wretchedness? Shall the prosperous sinner revel in dissipation, vice, and crime, die with "no bands" in his death, and escape forever? Not such is the teaching of natural justice, or of the Divine Word. Let us look once more at the text: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they *follow after*." O, this "following after" must be a fearful thing. The sinner must account, in the other world, for that dissipation which he boasted could not injure him in this. His human strength and hardihood have withstood the shocks of intemperate appetite and passion in this world, but how will they sustain the fires of hell? The wealth which enabled him here to gratify every desire of his heart, will not there avail to purchase him even "a drop of water to cool his tongue." The strong mind which, in this world, was proof against every species of debauch, will there find employment in enhancing, by its keener conception and more comprehensive grasp of the pleasures and privileges forfeited, the torments its possessor must eternally endure. That reckoning will teach him the value of the money which has gone to support the gambler's hell, to deck the harlot's home, and

to brutalize and degrade his fellow-men. God's wrath will teach him the value of the talents which he has prostituted and debased. Eternity will convince him of the worth of time. And, perhaps, as a climax to his misery, he will see, afar off, "in Abraham's bosom," that wretched and unfortunate Christian whom, in this world, he looked on but to loathe, and named but to condemn.

Very different will be the despised Christian's future ; and very different it ought to be. In this world he has his evil things ; in the next, ought he not to have his good things ? Here, his honesty is doubted because he is poor. The rich and great look coldly and suspiciously upon him. There, he will meet with Him who said, "Blessed are the poor ;" and who saw and sympathized with all the sorrows of his heart. And as that blessed Saviour shall take him by the hand, with the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful," will he not be more than compensated for earthly poverty ?

Here, his benevolence is contemned. Men think lightly of his gifts, though sanctified by earnest prayer. There, he will meet with Him who saw all the self-sacrificing devotion of his poor offerings. And when the lips of Infinite Tenderness shall say, "Thou hast given more than they all," will he care for man's misjudgment ?

In this world his piety is ridiculed, because its modes of expression are awkward and uncultivated. Many a scoff and jeer fall heavily upon his heart. But when he shall find that such piety as his is

current at the gate of Paradise, will he be any longer grieved for the ridicule of the world ?

Here, he meets with many losses of property. He has to struggle hard with adversity. He is discouraged by repeated failures. He is as honest, as industrious, as economical as any man. He rises early, he toils late, he eats the bread of carefulness. But somehow he *cannot* succeed. His whole life is one long temporal disaster. But will not the Kingdom of Heaven, which is his, atone for all this ?

Here, he suffers, being afflicted. His energies are paralyzed by disease. He lies long on "beds of pain." There, —

"Angel Health, with radiant wing,  
Sits ever on the breeze."

Here, he suffers by the loss of friends. The tender ties of conjugal, parental, and filial love are sundered by the hand of death. He looks with yearning agony upon the faces of his dead. He follows them to the grave, and feels as he turns away as if his own heart lay buried with them there. But who, think you, will give him the first warm greeting when his foot presses the shores of the better land ? What eyes will there beam brightest ? Whose embrace will there be fondest ? Why, those very loved ones whose bodies "he buried out of his sight" in the cold earth ! And will not the joys of such a reunion more than compensate for all the pangs of separation ?

Thus all the temporal inequalities of man's earthly life will find immortal atonement in the life to come.

## X.

### THE "GRACE OF JESUS" AND THE "LOVE OF GOD."

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." — REV. iii. 20.

PICTURE to yourself, a "lone, volcanic isle," surrounded by an illimitable sea, whose turgid billows, breaking ever on the rocky shore, sound the deep bass of nature's monody — the rhythmic thunders of the rolling years; and where no scene of beauty ever shines, and no sound of cheerful gladness is ever heard; where all is drear, and sad, and hard, and gray, and chill, and desolate; where nor flower nor fruit is ever seen; where the fires and ashes of the impending crater have scattered perpetual bleakness and desolation over all; where the atmosphere is foul and damp and sickening, with the poisonous vapors of the volcano; over which the mist and smoke and cloud hang a drapery of perpetual gloom, through which the sun and moon and stars are but faintly and occasionally seen, and never shine with any cheering, or beautiful or attractive light; an island, the production, in fact, of volcanic forces, under the sea, which have heaved it into the upper world, and which suddenly and unexpectedly again, in their season, will whelm it in the deep.

Picture to yourself, on this island, a solitary human dweller. How he came thither, he knows not. How long he must remain there, he understands not. What is best for him to do while there, he comprehends not. Only, he has heard or dreamed, or it has somehow reached his consciousness, that he is the product of the creative power, and the object of the provident tenderness of some Being, unseen and mysterious, who furnishes him, on condition of much painful toil, a precarious subsistence.

Of course, the place is haunted. There are demons of the fire, and demons of the deep, all around him. There are drunken Trinculos, and foul Calibans; and these he chooses for his familiars, rather than the delicate and faithful Ariels, whom, if he would, he might unprison and bind to his grateful service forever. The fiends deceive and win him. They have no power — because restrained by the unseen Master Hand — to coerce and destroy him. Taught by them, and with the rude materials at hand, he builds himself a house; covers and shutters it with the sea-drift of unknown wrecks; bars the door against all intruders; and shuts himself up to revelry and riot. And now, with every night-fall, over the waves of the solemn sea, there comes a shadowy bark, held and guided by a single hand; and its owner lands, staggering under a heavy burden, approaches the massy door of the fiend-built house, and knocks. All unheard or unheeded, still he knocks. All night long, in every pause of the fierce din within, still he knocks.

And knocks in vain. No door is opened — no bolt withdrawn — till the weary morning dawns ; and then the sad and gentle stranger reënters the shadowy bark, and is wafted far from the solitary isle, and its wretched denizen.

Such is a faint sketch of the picture, flung upon the canvas of the soul, by the magic pencil of Inspiration, in the simple utterance of the words of the text. The solitary island is this earth. The surrounding ocean is eternity. The lonely occupant is man. The fiend-built house is the edifice of his temporal fortunes. The night-falls are the lulls and pauses in the stormy ardor of his temporal pursuits. The shadowy bark, floating up from the eternal distance and bearing a single form, is Revelation bringing the Son of God to the rescue of man. The door of the house is the fortuitous side of life ; which man, fiend-aided, bolts and bars with all the forces of his intellect and heart. The "knock" of the Son of God is the Divine solicitation of man's attention through the sudden and unexpected changes of his temporal fortunes. The opening of the door is the flinging wide of all the spirit's hoarded wealth, to the control and government of God. The coming in and supping of the Son of God with man is the friendly and intimate communion of the Divine with the human, when the door of selfish possession is once thrown open for the entrance of the Master of all.

In this highly, and even wildly, figurative view of the subject, we are sustained by the plain and apparent suggestions of the Holy Ghost, in the

text, and confirmed by the evidence of admitted facts. The wildness is that of the actual scenery; whose savage and sterile features the hand of no human artist can adequately paint. If the glance of an unfallen spirit, standing on the nearest point to us of an unfallen world, were capable of reaching this world, and intelligently marking its condition, the figures which we have used would seem tame and inexpressive to him. As for us, we stand too near — we mingle too closely with the scene — to behold it as it is, even when our mental vision is aided by the perspective of Revelation.

So far as we know, or can understand, this temporal world is a solitary and desolate island of creation, lifted by unseen hands into the light of our present consciousness, and destined again, at some period near or far, to sink in the eternal surge that washes all around it. It is volcanic, too, with evil fires, and liable to the most terrible irruptions; as witness earthquake and tornado, fire and flood, pestilence and war; the voices that issue, ever and anon, from the black lips of that crater of hell which crowns the loftiest peak of Time. Crimes, like coals and fire-brands, are evermore scattered far and wide, and secret sins are strewn, like the ashes of sulphuric desolation, into every nook and crevice of the moral world. The verdure and beauty of all human virtues are withered and blighted, or scorched and scarred and stunted, like the sapless and half-dying shrubs that cling to the desolate sides of a volcanic hill. Evil holds its sullen reign, and flaunts its colors of bleakness and

blackness in every breeze that stirs the ashes of this lone and solitary isle of being.

And eternity is all around it. Wave on wave — an illimitable sea — it extends on every side. It holds us at its mercy. Its surf is ever beating on our shores, and sounding in our ears. Its breezes chill or warm or cheer us, as they come, from the mystic distance, through the open doorway of our expectant souls. Its storms sweep over us with terrific power; we feel ourselves shaken and tossed and buffeted by the tempests of the wide Unknown. There, too, in the dim distance, we see the lights of other worlds, and wonder of their fate; — wonder and speculate and dream, but never know. We are alone, in the midst of an eternal sea.

“O! this mystical, magical world!  
And this strangely conscious life!  
And the sullen car, in which we are whirled!  
And the elements all at strife!

“Strife within and strife without!  
Strife in nature and strife between men!  
And still in our souls, the maddest rout,  
Far from the reach of mortal ken!

“And over all, a terrible calm  
Reigns on earth, and reigns on high;  
Mocking our noise with its silent psalm;  
Shaming our din with its voiceless cry!”

So cries aloud, in his terrible unrest, the lonely occupant of this solitary isle. The mystery of his own nature perplexes and saddens him. He has aspirations high as heaven, and pure as an angel's thought; and he has appetites and propensities



altogether brutal and devilish. What power can reconcile him to himself? And then, whence came he? It is easy to reply, "God made him, out of the dust of the earth." But who, and what, and where is this God, so almighty? and what does He mean by leaving him here so long, in this arid solitude of sin, and then snatching him away from it suddenly and unwarned, whither? O! that ineffable whither! and that mystic door of death—swung on hinges of inexorable pain, and opened but to crack his heart-strings with its jarring strain—through which he must pass into the vast Unknown! This awful uncertainty dissipates his mind and cripples all its powers. If he only *knew* what was to become of him! Make his own destiny indeed! determine his own future! work out his own salvation! He does not believe it. He is conscious of no supernatural strength, which might qualify him for such a task. But one thing he can do, and he will: that is, provide for his present comfort. He will build himself an edifice of fortune, that shall defy, at least, the sharper ills of his present state. At the foundation, he will place the most solid and weighty of all the materials within his reach—the treasures of this world. The walls and roof, which shall insulate and protect him, he erects of the most finished and enduring intellectual culture. On these, again, he hangs all the adornments of domestic affection. The windows of Accident, and the great door of Chance, he shuts and fastens, as well as he can, with those materials, of the wreck of other souls, which

the storms of life have flung at his feet. This done, he sits down, as he terms it, to take his comfort. But alas! not alone. Three mighty fiends have been his aiders and abettors all the time, in the erection of his temporal fortune; and now they sit down with him to enjoy it. Their names are Selfishness, Sensuality, and Resentment. These prompt him in his revels, and guard the door of his temporal fortune against all heavenly intruders. Selfishness and Sensuality hurry him from object to object, of inordinate and passionate desire; and Resentment engages him in a thousand conflicts, with real or imaginary trespassers upon his rights. Thus he is kept in a perpetual fever of excitement, and forbidden to think upon his destiny or duty. If this state of excitement might be always maintained, his salvation would be one simple, natural, eternal impossibility. But thanks, if need be, to the infirmity of his nature — which lacks something yet of fiendish hardihood — there come seasons of silent and sad exhaustion, when even his familiar demons cannot prompt him to any new enterprise of sin. Now these are the night-falls of the soul — the solemn evening twilights — which follow its days of heated and noisy endeavor. And then, out of the mystic, shadowy distance, and over the waves of the eternal sea, there come floating recollections of the Truth, bearing the form of the smitten and crucified Redeemer.

Anon there comes a knock, which rouses all the ghostly echoes of that haunted soul-house! A knock, not loud — quite gentle, indeed — but in-

stinct with a thrilling sense of Power! for lo, on his heart and life, there falls from some unseen Hand an unexpected blessing! Whence came it? — this sudden affluence! or this new-born joy? Who is it that has remembered him for good, and thrust this unexpected benefit upon his soul? Has God, then, thought upon him at last? and will He interpose to bless and save him? This looks like it. He has half a mind to open the door, and see if some Divine Person did indeed knock. But here the fiends interpose. Selfishness tells him, "Beware, lest you lose all!" Sensuality tells him, "Stay, till you enjoy this new pleasure!" Resentment tells him, "Some crafty enemy is without! Better stop till you have marshaled your forces." Together, they raise such a rout that the sound of the knock is quite lost and forgotten. The soul is restrung for new orgies; and the gentle Stranger, discouraged, passes away into the eternal distance, out of which He came, full of love, to save an immortal life.

But once more the twilight of exhaustion quenches the burning ardors of the soul. Once more, from out the distance, rises upon the mind's horizon the shadowy image of spiritual things. Once more that Godlike Form draws near. There is a cloud of sadness on his brow, heart-breaking to look upon; for the Son of God is coming to make his last effort to save a dying soul. Again, that knock, on the shaking panels of the door of Chance! — not gentle as before, but wild and startling as the trump of doom! Ah! the quaking

soul hears it but too well! It shakes his choicest treasures from his trembling grasp, and they are lost to him forever. Again, that knock! The very furniture of his mind is moved by the fearful din! The horrid hand of Madness seems about to wrest his reason from his grasp! Once more that knock! and his very heart is falling into aching fragments, and hiding away in loathsome and unseemly graves, whence he can recover them no more. And then, breaking from the hands of the constraining fiends, he shouts, "Who is it knocks? Is there a God standing at my door?" That desperate cry has saved his life; for hark to the answer: "Behold *I* stand at the door, and knock!" then, sinking and softening to the tones of gentlest persuasion, "If thou wilt open unto me, I will come in, and sup with thee, and thou with me." "Enter, then," says the trembling soul, scarce freed from the struggling fiends,— "enter and take possession of my life!" and, with that magic word, down falls the door of Chance; and on the threshold stands the form of a Divine Providence!

"Where He evermore will stay;  
 Battling ever,  
 Yielding never  
 To the demon Sin his prey —  
 To the fierce and frenzied Fiend his human prey —  
 Till the day  
 When, from Heaven's unveiled glories, rock and mountain flee away."

Thus the celestial Stranger enters; and the fiends of Selfishness, Sensuality, and unholy Resentment flee, affrighted, from his sacred presence. One touch of that Divine hand, and the sin-sick

soul is healed, and the generous current of a new and spiritual life thrills in every vein, and pulsates in every artery, of his joyfully conscious being. *He* enters; and that sealed house of temporal fortune is changed, as by the wand of a magician, into a heavenly pavilion, open on every side, but pillared on divine strength, and covered with the shield of Heaven. There, henceforth, all heavenly visitants are welcome; and there every tired and stricken wanderer is free to enter, and find repose and help. *He* enters, and all is changed. The Divine embraces and lifts up the human. *Now* he is made to understand that all his temporal losses shall turn to immortal gains; that the treasures even of his heart, which he had deemed lost to him forever, shall have a new and happy and undying resurrection. Thus "clothed" with celestial understanding as a garment, "and in his right mind" concerning time, eternity, life, death, and all things, he sits down to "sup" with his Divine Companion. O that supper! in which the newborn soul communes for the first time with his God! — takes the place of the beloved Apostle, and leans on the breast of Jesus! What wonder that the grateful tears chase each other down his cheeks? What wonder that smiles, and impulses of celestial laughter, move him to ecstasy? What wonder if, at times, unable to control the wild rapture of his heart, he pours his soul into a shout of "Hallelujah to God and the Lamb?" He has but caught one strain of that song which the angels are always singing. Surely, this is not so very

grave a disorder. It certainly does not offend Heaven. And has Earth a nicer ear? I would we were in his place, we who murmur at his joy. We might not shout as he does; but we should comprehend well how and why he shouts, sitting at his first supper with the Son of God. O that supper! how it turns our minds back to the primal eucharist! which, if we mistake not, is its true type; the meaning being that, in this wonderful communion, there takes place an essential interchange of nature; Christ imparting to man something of his divine spirituality, and receiving from man all the burden of his sins. Let us therefore listen once more, with all our hearts, to his holy and touching appeal: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

## XI.

### INFINITENESS OF THE DIVINE AFFECTION.

“God is love.” — 1 JOHN iv. 8.

OF all the modifications of affection known to men, the rarest and divinest is benevolence. Unrenewed, selfish, and unprincipled men are capable of the love of passion and of kind ; and so also are some orders of the brute creation ; but benevolence is preëminently of God. Nay, says the Apostle, “God is benevolence ;” for so must we interpret the word “love,” benevolence being the only form of affection which we can predicate of a Divine Being. These grand words unveil, to the orphaned and sorrowing children of this world, the heart of a Divine Father. They are not, as they had thought and feared, alone. In the dull, cold, sad mystery of life, there appears all at once a heavenly clew, which followed faithfully, as each can, will lead every wanderer home to the embrace of Paternal Love. But some eyes cannot see this clew, and some ears cannot hear the words which proclaim it ; for spiritual things are “spiritually discerned ;” and “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

We may distinguish this phase of affection as the disposition to impart benefits to others. And

now, if we will go back into the eternities, and conceive a perfectly intelligent, unlimited, and all-pervading power, the law of whose necessary existence, and the governing principle of all whose motions, is this same quality of benevolence; if we will conceive of this power as tri-personal, — an everlasting Father, from whom, by an eternal generation, there is an everlasting Son, and from these, by an eternal procession, an everlasting Spirit; if we will conceive of the Son as the benevolence of the Divine Father voicing itself in filial Deity, and of the Holy Spirit as the benevolence of the Divine Father and Son, expressing itself in a personal and infinite Efficiency for good; and then if we will multiply these three eternal Factors — all infinite, all Divine — into each other forever, so that the product shall be an eternal Unity of quick and infinitely capable benevolence: if we will still further conceive this infinite Benevolence going out, as the ceaseless breathing of God, into the void universe, and crystallizing in all material forms, until the vacant house of the Almighty was filled with its starry denizens, until space was populous with worlds, and vocal with the echoes of their musical footsteps through the sounding chambers of the sky; if we will conceive this necessity of the Divine nature to be doing good bursting into spiritual creations of angel, archangel, and heavenly hierarch, until all the orders of celestial being were filled with personalities of glad and glorious life, — winged, ethereal, immortal, — and all the desires and capacities of every one fed to



ecstasy from the open hand of God ; and then his glance of kindness falling on the silent earth, and the senseless clods quickening, under that Divine regard, into a thousand forms of sentient being — worm for the dust, fish for the sea, beast for the field, and fowl to fly in the open firmament of heaven ; and then a pause, — the Divine Three in council, — and a Voice, piercing to the outmost bounds of being, and thrilling all the universe, “ Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and give him dominion over the earth ; ” and then, man made in the image of God, male and female, lapped in love, embowered with loveliness, and over all, the sheltering presence of a Divine Father, whose heart of parental tenderness stooped to human converse with his human child ; — if we will conceive all this, we shall obtain a faint glimpse of the Divine character, as it is revealed in the Scriptures, and manifested in creation.

But how, we shall perhaps feel inclined to inquire, does this supreme benevolence, which is claimed as the paramount feature in the character of the Almighty, and the spring of all his actions, consist with the evil of which He made man capable, and in whose painful consequences he was shortly afterwards, and has been ever since, and shall be to all eternity, in the person of many of his descendants, involved ? Did not God certainly foreknow that man would sin ? And did He not accurately discern all the sad consequences, to man, of that sin ? How, then, if the result of man’s creation was to inflict eternal misery on the larger

proportion of his race, could the creation of the race consist with what is claimed for the Divine beneficence? The question is both vexed and difficult; but it ought to be fairly met, and fully and candidly considered. It is true, then, we concede, that, the knowledge of God being infinite, the end of human progress, both in good and evil, with all its intermediate incidents, must have been plain to Him at the era of man's creation, as was the simplest then present fact of being; and it is also true that there is much suffering in the present life, and that, according to the Divinely revealed conditions of salvation, and the general drift of human volitions, by far the greater number of men will be finally lost. But let us consider, in the first place, that the Divine foreknowledge can be no more causative, can no more affect the thing known, than the Divine after-knowledge; in other words, that a human contingency, or any other thing, is no more affected by being known as certain in the future, than by being known as certain in the past. Knowledge is never influential, or causative, on the thing known. I know that the sun shines, but my knowledge does not in the least affect its shining; nor, any more, does the knowledge of the Almighty of the same fact affect the fact. "Ay," you reply, "but his power does." That is very true; but his knowledge of a fact, and his power exerted to accomplish that fact, are two quite different things. Suppose that He had given me absolute control over the sun, so that, of my own free, untrammelled will, neither constrained by Him nor by any cir-

cumstance or creature, I might either blot it out of the universe with a gesture, or cause it to shine on forever. Now while it is true that He would certainly know in which direction my free choice or caprice would turn, it is equally true that if He had really committed the matter to me, and I were really a free being, He would in no sense influence the result, however perfectly He might know it, save only as He might be considered responsible for committing it to my discretion ; and with that question we will deal anon. But in the mean time, apply the illustration to the question of man's salvation, either personal, or extending to his race, and we have the same result : God's foreknowing it does not at all affect it, if He have left it in our hands ; and He distinctly assures us that He has so placed and left it.

With regard to human suffering in the present life, in addition to the truth that it is mainly produced by man's voluntary violations of the organic laws of his being, it is to be remarked that the compensating power of happiness sweeps away much of the mystery from this otherwise sinister fact. The years of a man's prison-torture are forgotten in the first hour of his joyous restoration to freedom. So the pain, toil, anguish, anxiety of a long pursuit of any cherished object are blotted out by the rapture of the first moment of possession. Thus we see, when they are justly regarded, that in nothing, perhaps, in the present life, is the kindness of the Creator more signally displayed than in those very proportions and relations of

happiness and misery here, which have been objected as barriers to such a conclusion.

Having thus disposed, as we trust, of these preliminary difficulties, we return to the main question involved in this objection, namely, if, so far as we can see, the greater proportion of human beings will be lost, and God foreknew this fact at the era of their creation, how does their creation consist with the supposition that beneficence is the governing attribute of the Divine-character? Why should man have been made capable of evil? — or, if he must needs be capable of evil, and the Almighty knew that his evil capacity would certainly become, in the greater number of instances, his evil destiny, why should he have been made at all?

Let us remember, first, that the popular notion of evil is, like the popular notions of cold and darkness, based upon a misapprehension of its essential nature. The interminable controversies, among the philosophers, concerning the origin of evil, one would suppose, might easily have been avoided, if the disputants would but have remembered that evil is not, in itself, a positive quality, but the mere and necessary consequence of the absence of good. Wherever, in the moral universe, good is not, or does not bear sway, there evil dwells or reigns; just as where light is not, or does not make day, darkness dwells or reigns. If, to this view, it be objected that there seems something very positive about dark and bloody crimes, it need only be replied, that crime is but the natural tendency to

destruction, in the moral world, where good, the grand conservator, is not. If, again, it be objected that there are personal evil agencies in the universe, and that these agents harm not only themselves, but others, it may be replied that such evil agencies are just so many moral beings, more or less destitute of good, and that all their efficiency to injure others depends upon the free consent of those others. In a word, moral good is the conserving presence of the Divine in a moral being; and moral evil is the absence of God from a moral being, and the consequent progress of that being toward destruction. But all finite possession of good is in degrees, greater or less; and to create an intelligent being who should have no freedom to diminish the sum of good in his possession, would be to deprive him alike, and in consequence, of the power to increase it; it would be to create a being capable of neither vice nor virtue; in a word, it would be to create a brute, and not a man, nor an angel. Subordinate moral existence becomes, then, an impracticable chimera; and between God and the "beasts that perish" there could be no subordinate spiritual powers. Will we continue to say, then, that if a moral being could neither be created nor conceived of that should not be also free and able to sin and fall, it were better that there should have been no such beings? Would we blot from the universe all moral existence save the supreme One? Are we wise and great enough to dare this consequence?

Besides, who shall assure us that, even on the

plane of human being, the final balance will be against good? This world, for aught we know, and despite the teaching of our latter day prophets and millenarians, may be yet in its human infancy. The years of human history gone by, compared with its years to come, may be few and insignificant. One thing we do know; and that is that the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ; and that every human knee must bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, before the affairs of time shall be wound up, and the problem of human existence solved. And we know another thing! by the light of reason and justice we read it, as from the mouth of God: that no new facilities will be offered, and no new agencies employed, to accomplish these results. Divine Truth, an all sufficient Atonement, the Holy Spirit, and "these treasures in earthen vessels," borne by frail yet converted men, must be all that the world can ever have to bring it to Christ. And yet the world is coming to Christ, in the person of all its human inhabitants; for the mouth of the Lord hath declared it. Does it become us, then, to criticise plans which are the products of infinite Wisdom, and whose temporal scope, even, we cannot come near to grasp?

But lo! another barrier to the acknowledgment of the Divine beneficence! Why then, says one, if He knew that I would be lost, did God make me? or why not have cut me off in infancy, ere I became responsible? The same question might

be asked with reference to every moral agent who will misuse his liberty, sin, and be lost. Nay, in common fairness, it must be asked; for what is right in a given case, is right in all other like cases. The question is then, by logical necessity, reduced to the following terms: Why could not the Almighty have declined to create all those moral beings who, he foreknew, would, if they should be created, so use their liberty as to render themselves forever unhappy? and thus limit responsible existence to those other moral beings who, He as certainly foreknew, would choose the better part and so be forever happy? But does not this supposition involve a plainly absurd impossibility? It is proposed to create an order of beings, free to evil as to good: which is of course essential to the idea of responsibility; and then to strike from the muster-roll of such creation all who will choose evil rather than good! But this is to destroy the integrity of the order of moral beings about to be created: first, by blotting out, at one stroke, say one half its numbers! This is not the creation designed, but another. It is no longer an order of beings, free to evil as to good; but a mere fraction of that order, and only free to good, because they have no conception of evil, and cannot, therefore, be tempted or solicited by it; and hence, secondly, without the power, or opportunity (which is the same thing), to make any choice whatever. Hence, also, the good which they pursue is not of free choice; because no alternative has been presented to them; and if not of free choice, it is from

the necessity either of their nature or circumstances. They have, then, lost the very essence of the quality of moral beings, and are no longer anything but mere sentient machines, created or circumstanced (no difference which), to run in a particular direction, without the possibility of ever changing it! Their virtue is no more virtue, but necessity; and thus the whole splendid fabric of an order of free and responsible creatures falls into utter ruin, under the clumsy hand of that human Presumption which would alter and amend the works of God! There was no alternative. Either man must not be; or he must be as he is, man, in the image of God, with the awful sovereignty of his soul in his own hands, and free to fling it down to hell as to lift it up to heaven. And he has, it must be admitted, flung it down to hell, thus far; but he has exhausted neither the patience nor the pity of his God. There is reason to suppose that the dungeons of the lost, even, are as tolerable as the passions of the lost will permit the Almighty to make them. Hell is the insane asylum of the moral universe; and it is in evidence, not of the vengeance of the Supreme State, but of its compassion. Somewhere, for their own and others' good, those moral lunatics who are so deeply smitten with the foul allurements of sin that they consecrate their immortality to it, must be confined and disciplined. God will not suffer them to run howling up and down through his universe forever. So, they would but pain and affright the good, and work deadlier mischief to



themselves. Therefore, having passed their probation in his sanitarium of mercy, and set at defiance all the healing remedies of the Physician of souls, when hopeless of all cure, they are consigned to the chain and the cell. And does this argue aught against the Divine beneficence ?

But God has not left us to conclude his love alone from these dark reasonings, and the apparently conflicting voices of nature and providence. He has uttered it in terms which only willful perversity and wickedness can misapprehend ; written it in letters of blood ; expressed it in groans of inconceivable anguish. And the name of this wonderful revelation of love is Calvary. Calvary ! Strange spectacle ! Sad mystery of Divine love manifested in human life, in human suffering, in human death ! “ God, made flesh,” and dwelling among men, that He might gather with the hand of an all-human sympathy every wretched capacity of the race, and bind it in a crown of anguish on his own Divine brow ! We can comprehend the philosophy of Divine beneficence, in its ordinary phases : how, from infinite fullness, there should proceed endless benefits. But when to bless costs personal suffering ; when, to relieve from death, one must become himself the substitute, and die ; when he must gather all deaths into one, and concentrate on a point of time the agonies of thousands of millions of men and immortal ages of time, and hold them on his own heart until that heart is crushed under the fiery load : this demands the loving strength of God. O ! Jesus was very

God! A single soul's suffering had slain a *man* in a moment; but He endured for hours the sufferings of all men, for time and eternity! O! those three dreadful hours! during which the weight of hell rested and wrought and wreaked all its furies on the patient heart of the Son of God! We may doubt of God's love when we reason; we may doubt of God's love when we suffer; but we can never doubt of God's love when we look on Calvary. Justice has no place in that scene. It is infinite Love grappling with the armed hands of its suicidal child, and receiving in its own breast all the wounds intended to accomplish self-slaughter; that so, by the sight of his Father's blood, shed by his hand, the wretched lunatic might be restored to reason, and melted to penitence! Therefore, by this eternal token, "Love is of God," and "God is Love."

## XII.

### GLORYING IN THE PERISHABLE.

“Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me; that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” — JER. ix. 23, 24.

THE lesson of the text seems to be this: Man should not glory in the fading and perishing, but in the enduring and imperishable. The entire soundness of this proposition appeals to all the intellect and heart within us. As we advance in life, and its great tasks open more clearly on our enlarging understandings, we turn away, from time to time, in weariness and disgust, from pursuits which once had power to awaken all the enthusiasm of our natures. From the maturity of life, and the pride of its deep and difficult philosophical studies, we look back, with a kind of pitying wonder, upon the past. The toys of childhood! how is it possible that they could once have filled and satisfied our souls? The pleasures of youth! how puerile they seem! and how transient and deceitful the fires which they kindled in our blood! The ordinary pursuits of men! how insignificant and unworthy! These things, *now*, never rise higher

than our contempt, and oftener sink below it, into complete forgetfulness, until we cease to remember that we have ever been children and triflers. Such are the pride and self-sufficiency begotten in the stern struggles of maturer life. But what if all this is but another and deeper illusion? What if something still better, and infinitely above even these high pursuits, and yet not altogether beyond our reach, should remain?

Some such supreme and ultimate Good there is, and to it, we conceive, these words of Holy Writ ask us to-day to look up.

Man, says infinite Wisdom, should not glory in the perishing. But what is it to glory in the fleeting and transitory? It is, for example, to glory in human wisdom. When one devotes his life to the acquisition, arrangement, analysis, and application of knowledge, in one or more, or (if this were possible) all of its departments; when his efforts are attended with some degree of success, and he feels himself superior in these attainments to most of his fellows; when self-love, and long and close attention to the same subjects, and the praises of others, conspire to produce in his mind an extravagant estimate of the importance and value of his acquisitions; when he relies upon them for success and happiness in life; when he deems himself, because of his intellectual attainments, better than other men; when his pulses thrill with joyous excitement, in response to every introspective glance, which reveals how much he knows and how well he thinks: when he exults in all this, then, indeed, he glories in his wisdom.

So, when one devotes all his powers to the acquisition of influence and authority over his fellow-men ; when he possesses those commanding talents, or is the sport of those happy circumstances which exalt him, in position, far above others ; when he imagines himself so firmly and royally seated in his high place that nothing can ever shake his throne, or snatch the diadem from his brow, or wrest the sceptre from his grasp ; when he launches his soul's wealth on the shining bubble of his authority, and fondly imagines that it will ride there safely forever ; when he dreams that, because of his social exaltation, he is of another and finer spirit and clay than those which enter into the mould of common men ; when he drinks to intoxication of the wine of flattery and self-gratulation ; when he rejoices in his power : then it is that he glories in his might.

So, also, when one inherits or acquires an amount of material wealth which confers upon him the distinction of eminent riches ; when he suffers their means of influence and powers of gratification to bound the aspirations of his nature ; when he wishes nothing greater or better or more enduring than they ; when he believes himself intrinsically better than the poor man, because he is extrinsically richer than he ; when his wealth absorbs, for its care or increase, both his intellect and his heart ; when his highest and deepest joy is in the contemplation of his riches and the thought that he possesses them : then he, too, glories in his riches.

It is not too much to say, that this state of mind

is the common curse of those who attain to eminence in intellectual cultivation, power, and wealth. The temptations thus to "glory" are so many and so strong that few are able to resist them. Wisdom, for example, is intrinsically so precious; it is of so much account to human nature; the world is so dependent upon it for material comfort, as well as for intellectual culture; it is such an inalienable inheritance; so few possess it; it lifts one so far above the mass of his fellows; its pleasures are so purely spiritual; it is such a glorious and divine privilege to know; it is such bliss to bathe the soul in an atmosphere of truth, where common spirits cannot breathe, — to sweep, with tireless wing, the vast empyrean of thought, and pause but to gather strength for new and higher flights, — all this so dazzles and dizzies the soul that we cannot wonder that men glory in it.

So of power, that mimicry of Omnipotence in which grown up children make believe that they are gods. Its achievements are so wonderful; it is capable of so much; its sceptre reaches so far, — why should it not touch the Infinite? The illusion of its permanence is strengthened by the servility of inferiors. The wise, the rich, the great bend in lowly reverence before its footstool. The smiles of Beauty and the praises of Manhood are its meed. It is petted and caressed and feared. The brave tremble at its nod, and even Genius prostitutes its high powers to base and shameless flattery. It ministers gratification to the strongest passions of our nature; bids us ask and have —

desire and be satisfied. With all these attributes, it asks the trust of the heart which it flatters, and the homage of the head which it crowns. Is it strange that it should not ask in vain? Is it wonderful that men should glory in their power?

So, also, with riches. They can purchase so much for us; they can fill our homes with luxury, and surround them with elegance; they can render common to our eyes all that is excellent and convenient in science, all that is rare and beautiful in art; they can atone for so many defects, hide so many blemishes; they can "gild the straitened forehead of the fool," smooth the hateful lineaments of vice, and hide the stains of crime; they can absolve from so much of social responsibility, for who dares reckon with the rich? Who pretends to hold them to the same rigid account which society requires of other men? From the burdens and restraints, as from the pains and penalties, of ordinary life, they are immemorially exempt. What wonder, then, that they should glory in the riches which have power to do them such deep social favors?

But all these temptations to glory in human wisdom, might, and riches are opposed by reasons which, it would seem, should forever deter us from such folly. Human wisdom, when we think of it soberly, and especially when we contrast it with the Perfection which we are able to imagine, is such a poor, fallible, defective thing; its sphere is so limited, its errors so gross, and its results so unsatisfying; that it is only when we are intensely

conscious of its weakness and folly, that we approach its highest attainments. It is so borrowed and dependent, — it is held by a tenure so frail and light, — that the only sentiment which its possession ought to inspire is the deepest humility. The spiritual pleasures of which it boasts are not always pure, and do not certainly lead to permanent peace. On the contrary, they are deceitful and illusory; and it is only when they have led us into a region of care and sorrow and cloud, that we perceive the Paradise of humble faith which we have left behind.

How near at hand, how open to every mind, lie those reflections which strip from human authority its semblance of reality, and leave it but a passing pageant and a transient shadow! The hand that holds its sceptre may be pulseless in an hour. The breath of social change may dissipate it in a moment. And while it remains, how limited its sway! How small a part of the material world owns its influence? How stubborn the inert resistance which is maintained by that small part! How far above its yoke soars the free-born spirit! How inscrutable the mask which human nature wears before it! It can read no heart. The homage which it receives is almost always insincere. The supple knee and feigned smile may hide the deadliest hatred. Love and friendship are banished from its court; or, if they approach, it cannot distinguish them from the hollow crowd who wear their semblance. The passions which it gratifies are our deadliest enemies. They undermine



the health, exhaust the intellect, and scorch and shrivel up the soul, until suddenly, a stained and blackened thing, it is summoned to the bar of God. Who, if he dared to think these true and sober thoughts, would glory in his power ?

And wherefore should the rich man glory in his riches ? True, they can purchase much, but there are some things which money cannot buy. The heart of tenderness ; the voice, the hand of Affection ; the tone, the temper of angel Kindness ; the suffrages of noble and uncorrupted souls ; the priceless jewel of a true and devoted friend ; a conscience undefiled ; a heart at rest and peace ; the smile, the blessing, the friendship of Heaven : these are above all price. No golden guerdon can bring them from afar. Riches do not really atone for defects, nor hide blemishes ; they only seem to do so, while, in truth, they render both but the more apparent and disgusting. In the presence of wealth, men may applaud its folly for wisdom ; but once beyond the reach of its ear and eye, and they are wild with merry mockery of its silly sayings. Its vices may be gilded with the popular sanction, when it is near ; but they are banned with the popular curse, when it is far. Its crimes may pass unpunished by that human justice whose eyes are blinded by its gold ; but there comes at last a stern and relentless reckoning, which will atone for all ; and the very means which diminish responsibility here will tremendously increase it there. O ! what a boundless and ineffable curse are riches to him who glories in their possession !

It were better for him that he had dragged out a wretched life, in penury and pain; since then he would have had to render but life's common account, unswelled by the terrible aggravation of wealth.

Therefore, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; nor the mighty man in his might; nor the rich man in his riches. In a word, let no man glory in the perishing and transient; but, if he will glory, let him glory in the enduring and eternal; if he will trust, and be proud of, and rejoice in something, let it be something worthy of the trust, pride, and joy of an undying spirit. Let him glory in a rational knowledge of God. Let him exult in his splendid conception of the one pure, spiritual, and all-controlling Existence of the universe. Let him rejoice in the glorious sunlight of this matchless thought; and to strengthen his conception, and intensify his consciousness of blessing, let him cast one mental glance upon those moral antipodes of the earth, where the light of this truth has never shone; or glimmers darkly down, in reflected and broken rays, from the traditions of earlier days. Let him think of a thousand millions of his fellow-men, groping in a perpetual moral night. Let him gaze upon their blind and helpless and bloody adventures, in search of the truth which he possesses. And to strengthen still further his conception of the value of such knowledge, let him look on those deluded men, who, standing by his side, bathed in the same light which illumines him, resolutely close their

eyes, and persist that all is night, and that no God is here. Let him trace their devious course, interrupted by repeated and cruel falls, till they are lost to his sight beyond the precipice of Death, over which they recklessly stumble. Then let him look on those others, scarcely less blind and stupid than the atheist, who cover their eyes and exclude more or less of the light of Revealed Truth, with the veil of religious enthusiasm. Let him glance at the cursing infidel, at the ranting fanatic, at the stately formalist; and as he turns from all these forms of wretched and pitiable blindness, to realize, once more, that he stands, with his eyes open, in the full and glorious light of a rational and revealed knowledge of God, — then, if he will glory, let him glory in that knowledge.

Men may, also, if they will, glory in their knowledge of the infinite and perfect Providence of God; that He who created all sustains all; that He who sustains all controls all; that the mightiest and minutest material changes are alike the objects of his attention, and the effects of his action; that He governs the moral and spiritual, not less than the material world; that the infinite range of dependent existence is comprehended by his glance, and lies within reach of his hand; that every operation of every intellect in the universe, — from that angel near his throne, on whose glorious brow has shone the light of years, only not eternal; and that other angel, whose soul, marred as it is by the everlasting thunders, is yet magnificent even in its ruins, — from the highest types of

dependent spiritual existence, down to the smallest mould in which a soul is ever cast ; that every motion of every soul receives his attention ; that no single spirit ever makes the smallest progress in holiness, but that progress is recognized, and that spirit is rewarded with his approving smile ; that there is no stain of earthliness and sin contracted by any soul, but He notes it, and makes that soul conscious that he condemns it ; that all individual prosperity in this life, — the multiplication of our comforts and blessings, and our personal and peculiar exemption from its evils and sufferings, — that all this is of Divine appointment ; and that no storm, no cloud, no loss, no affliction, no bereavement, no pang, can touch the soul or body here, but He, directly or indirectly, sends it. If men will glory, let them glory in such knowledge as this.

But, more especially, if one will glory, let him glory in an experimental knowledge of the Divine favor. If, through the influence of a spiritual and omnipotent Agency, he have been made to realize the entire corruption of his nature, the total perversion of his habits, and the deep and ruinous turpitude of his actions ; if he have felt thorough and sincere compunction for all this ; if he have turned, with honest self-loathing, from evil to good ; if his mental eye have found and rested on the cross of Christ ; if he have perceived the all-sufficient efficacy of the atonement which it represents ; if he have laid every interest which connects him with time and eternity upon this hallowed and hallowing Altar ; if the sacrifice have been accepted,

and the acceptance attested by the presence and purifying agency of Divine fire ; if purged from his old sins, he have become a new creature ; if the work of consecration be complete, and he be “ sanctified throughout soul, body, and spirit ; ” if his communion with God the Father, Son, and Spirit, be intimate and constant ; if he have “ an unction from the Holy One, which fills his heart with joy and girds his soul with power : ” then, indeed, he may glory ; yet “ God forbid ” that he “ should glory, save in the cross of Christ.”

But many are the temptations to undervalue this knowledge. The rational idea of God is so plainly revealed, and so commonly received ; the millions, who are strangers to it, are so very far away ; the wild tales which reach us from those benighted lands are so improbably extravagant ; skepticism is so uncommon, and its actions and attitudes so ridiculous ; the common forms of enthusiasm are so harmless, and its deeper evils so rare and remote ; that, altogether, we find it hard to realize that we are peculiarly blessed in a rational knowledge of God.

And so are we tempted to reason of Providence. What imports to us, we are sometimes led to ask, a knowledge of the Divine Agency which controls the material, and regulates the spiritual world ! Our knowledge is not causative. The Government which we know, is not influenced by our knowledge, nor are we affected beneficially by its possession, or injuriously by failing to possess it. Our temporal blessings are so rich and regular. They

generally come unasked, and often come unexpected. They fall, without apparent distinction, upon the evil and the good. Life and health and every temporal comfort, and all material prosperity—they come—why should we inquire whence, or how? Is it not enough that these, and all our afflictions, seem to depend on second causes? Why should we inquire further? Are there not immutable laws, on which all these things depend? Can we alter or annul them? Has not the Supreme Agent, having enacted them, retired to a repose, which neither our petitions nor our faith can disturb? Why, then, should we appreciate so highly, a knowledge of the Divine Providence?

And really, we are sometimes led to doubt, whether there be much in an experimental knowledge of the Divine favor, which should cause glorying. Repentance is so often shallow and insincere; men are so frequently deceived with regard to their own mental operations: who shall assure us that our desires have not produced our convictions? Professions of conversion so often fail to change the life; the practical proof of genuine faith is so generally wanting:—how know we that others are not laughing at our inconsistencies? Entire consecration—the full anointing of the Holy Ghost—is so rare; the common verdict is so strong against its attainableness: may not the common verdict be right? May not those splendid and dazzling exceptions, who, we have been taught to believe, convulsed the world by their spiritual power,

have merely surprised it, by their wonderful talents? May not the whole doctrine of human experience of Divine things be a mistake, — a dream, a poetical fable? Why then, should we glory in that which is so uncertain and inconclusive? Why should we glory in the knowledge of God?

Because a rational knowledge of the one infinite Existence is the only clew to all other correct and valuable mental acquisition; because this is the key-thought which opens the door of universal truth; because, deprived of the light of this knowledge, all inferior objects assume unnatural and monstrous proportions; so that of a stock, a stone, a brute, a companion, a quality of human nature, man will make a god, and prostrate his soul before its false and unreal altar in idolatrous worship; because millions of souls, in so-called Christian lands, are kneeling there to-day; because, otherwise, we may catch their spirit, and join in the polluted feast and intoxicated dance of the world's idolatry, all unheeding the thunders of divine vengeance which are rolling on the hill above us; because it will strengthen us against skeptical allurements, and be the means of opening some eyes, now willfully closed to this great Light; because, otherwise, the veil of religious enthusiasm may fall, in an unguarded moment, over our own vision, and we may become fanatics, or formalists, or mystics, or antinomians, and prefer our shadowy world to what will then seem to us the glaring light of truth: these are reasons why we should cultivate, and cherish, and "glory in" a rational knowledge of the divine Existence.

And for our knowledge of the infinite providence of God, if there were no other reasons why we should glory in it, the simple fact that it lifts our minds from inferior, blind, and helpless second causes to the great first efficient Cause of all things, is enough. Surely, the expanding power of this infinite Thought upon the soul were ample benefit. Who would not rather soar, if but to try his wing, and exult in mere capacity of pinion, than grovel forever on the earth? To ascend, step after step, in the magnificent conception of an infinite Providence, and look out upon the ever-broadening scenes of divine Efficiency, until, from its dizzy height, the Mind shall grasp the whole stupendous range of material and spiritual existence, and catch a glimpse of the radiant glories of that divine Hand, in whose hollow they all repose, — surely this is better, wiser, mightier, more becoming the spirit's heritage of immortality, than searching among the rubbish of material change for the petty points on which it turns. And O, what a fatal mistake is that which human Reason makes, when she tells us that such knowledge as this affects neither ourselves nor the Hand which holds us! On the contrary, it affects both. This intensely joyful recognition of Providence is the spiritual homage which wins the caress of infinite Power. Blessings and afflictions, coming from the same intelligent and benevolent Source, have moral ends; and the former are richer and more regular, the latter rarer and lighter, because of our faith and piety.



We should glory in our personal and spiritual experience of the Divine favor, for the very reasons which, lightly considered, tempted us to undervalue this experience. So few truly repent! If it be so, and we do truly repent, this is motive for deeper joy; that the grace which so few improve, has been welcomed to our hearts; that the jewel, which so many will not wear, sheds its holy and beautiful light on our path. So few show fruits of genuine conversion! If it be so, and if we fail not in those evidences; if to the inward and constant consciousness of Divine favor, we add a life of perfect moral purity and continual effort for human welfare, — may we not the more rejoice in our genuine devotion, because it is so rare? So few are daily consecrated! But if our lives are set apart entirely to the glory of God; if we are conscious of a Divine and spiritual efficiency, which renders our humble abilities of more account to our fellow creatures, then the vastly and brilliantly superior talents of others, — surely, in all this we have a right to glory, and we will.

### XIII.

#### THE SPLENDID TRIUMPHS OF REDEMPTION.

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” — EPH. ii. 11, 12, 13.

PERHAPS the best known and the longest-lived of all the fables of this world, is that of the Wandering Jew. All the others are dead: not forgotten, it is true, but dead. There is neither life nor power in them. They do not awake the imagination, nor stir the heart. But this of the Wandering Jew yet lives; is the theme of poetry and romance, the subject of genuine superstition, and thrills, with a weird and resistless influence, the soundest reason and the strongest heart.

And thus the fable runs: It was in Jerusalem, and on the day of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, that the last scion of the princely house of Naphthali, — a man in the prime of life and the maturity of intellectual power and culture, — distinguished himself as the most zealous and pitiless of all the persecutors of the meek and voiceless Victim. He stimulated the already vindictive authorities of the

Sanhedrin. He stirred the wild mob to demand the release of Barabbas, and insist upon the death of Christ. His voice led the sanguinary chorus, "Crucify Him! crucify Him! His blood be on us and on our children!" He prompted the reckless soldiery to improve, somewhat, upon their wonted cruelties. He devised those solemn mockeries that insulted so deeply the holy impotence of suffering. The robe of mimic royalty, the crown of thorns, and the appropriate taunts, were of his suggestion. He presided at the scourging, and the smiting, and the spitting. And when, upon the exhausted and bleeding Form, was laid the heavy cross, he still led the hooting, raging mob. He urged the Victim to impossible speed and exertion, until, overpowered, He fell beneath his burden; and then, with his sharp and heavy scourge, he struck, and fiercely bade Him rise and haste to death. Then, prone and bleeding as He lay, Jesus turned upon him the glance of those sad, ineffable eyes, with the words, "Rest *thou* not till I come." It was the bolt of fate,—the sentence of a lonely and inexpiable doom. He shrunk back from those reproachful eyes till the crowd hid him from their gaze, but he saw them still. Out from the heated mob he sped to the neighboring hills; but he still saw the glance, he still heard the words; and he knew his doom. He was a husband and a father; and he must survive all he loved. And henceforth, for some nameless but tremendous term, he must be a restless wanderer on the face of the earth. He saw his kindred, his people, and his

nation die. He has seen the birth and death of modern empires and states. He wanders through all nationalities; he belongs to none. He meets all people; he recognizes none. He has not one acquaintance on the wide, wide earth which he traverses day and night. He is the ideal stranger, — homeless, friendless, tired, restless, ineffably and painfully alone. With a single exception, he is the type of that spiritual loneliness and alienation which St. Paul has pictured in the text: he cannot die, and the sinner can and must.

On such a picture of dreariness and gloom the Apostle calls upon Christians to look, and to connect it, by memory, with their own personal condition in the unhappy and guilty past, before they were converted to Christ. "Wherefore, remember that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Taking counsel at the lips of God's holy Apostle, let us notice, then, as they occur in the text, the several shades of that darkness in which we were involved, before we found "the Light of life." In the first place, we may remember that we were without Christ. And what is it to be "in the world" "without Christ?" It is to be a sinner, without a Saviour. It is to be a violator of God's holy law, and exposed to its deathful penalties, with no Daysman to stand between us and shield us from the offended majesty of Heaven. It is to be conscious of guilt, with no hope of forgiveness.

It is to have committed the inexpiable offense, the unpardonable sin, and to be haunted henceforth by "a terrible looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation." It is to be doomed to pain, and wrath, and tribulation, and disappointment, and disease, and death, and judgment, and hell, with no possibility of amelioration or release. It is to be condemned to an immortal life of inexorable and intolerable torment. It is to look into the whole future, and see an infinite duration and a constant increase of inevitable pain and woe. It is to behold, in every forward glance, the fearful vista of an ever-broadening and deepening hell. It is to be chained to an inexorable car of tortured being, and whirled down the plane of endless years into the sullen and angry depths of a bottomless damnation. It is to see our little ones, our loved ones, our nearest and dearest, snatched from our side by angel hands, — forbidden to share our misery, though they love us well enough to die with us and for us, — and borne away to the infinite felicities of glory, while we are only the faster bound, and fiercer driven, into the night of endless gloom and torment. It is to feel that, for our condition and doom, we alone are responsible; to be able to blame, for our misery, nothing and nobody in heaven, earth, or hell save our wretched selves. It is to remember that we once had a Saviour who would gladly have redeemed us from all this, but we voluntarily forsook and cast Him off. It is to have outgrown the innocence of our childhood, banished its angel from our bosom, cast off the vir-

tuous restraints of our youth, summoned the devils to our side, and committed to their keeping, in a compact from which we can never withdraw, our immortal souls. And the terrible bolt of truth that rivets us to this fearful doom while "without Christ in the world," is the possibility of instant death. We might have died "without Christ" at any moment before our conversion, and then we must have realized far more of woeful truth than we have suggested or ever could suggest. "Wherefore, remember that, at that time ye were without Christ."

The Apostle exhorts us to remember, also, "that, at that time, we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." By the commonwealth of Israel is intended, in a spiritual sense, the kingdom of God on earth, or the true and invisible Church of Christ. It is as though, in the midst of a world of human beings, all savage and barbarous, a Ruler had appeared and set up an insulated kingdom, with all the refinements, arts, and luxuries of the highest civilization; and all who became its citizens — and all, by an act of submission, might become its citizens — were subject to its laws, protected by its government, and entitled to its franchises. Within, all was brightness, and beauty, and glory, and peace; but without, there frowned the dark wilderness, peopled with dusky forms, and loathsome with the horrid rites of savage superstition and cruelty. And of these savage and barbarous aliens were we. The wilderness of sin was our birth-place. There, on the cold rocks, amid tangled

and gloomy thickets, heavy with poisonous dews and peopled with devouring monsters, we began to be ; and there we must have perished in a moment, but that the pitying King saw and snatched us from the horrid death ; albeit Himself was sorely wounded in the fell encounter with our savage foes ; and thence, all helpless and unconscious, we were borne within the starry gates of Innocence, and lapped in the tender cares of nursing angels till our childhood was safely passed ; and thence we wandered, in our wild and thoughtless youth, once more into the wilderness of sin ; and there we made our home in caves and dens of evil, surrounded by monster iniquities that waited impatiently for a little space till the powerful odor of our innocence, which we had borne from the city of the King, had quite vanished, and they might tear us limb from limb, and lap the blood of our immortal souls. There were we, aliens, and unconscious of our alienation ; exposed to a thousand dangers, and unconscious of our peril ; ripening hourly for the maw of greedy and insatiate monsters, and deeming them friendly and innocuous, and covering them with caresses. We had drunk of a Circean cup, and had forgotten the beauties of the city from which we had wandered, and discerned not the horrors with which we were surrounded, and heard not the cries of mourning from friends and kindred. Death, in a thousand forms, came near and threatened us, and we saw him not. He whetted his grim scythe upon the tombstone of our own fathers, and mothers, and sisters, and broth-

ers, and wives, and children, and we heard him not. He discharged a thousand parks of artillery, and mowed down tens of thousands in our sight, and we looked on as coldly as if our turn were not coming. He plied the musket and the pistol, the bayonet and the sabre, the dagger, knife, and bludgeon, and poured his poisons all around us ; and we looked on as at a tame and meaningless spectacle. " Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," without protection, law, help, strength, life ; dying every moment, and hasting to a deeper, darker, and eternal death, — let us remember " that, at that time," such were we.

Again, at the touch of the mighty wand of Inspiration, the scene changes, and we are bidden to remember that, at that time, " we were strangers from the covenants of promise." " The covenants of promise " are the conditions on which God has promised to bless and save his people. All who comply with these conditions are parties to the covenants ; all who refuse to comply, are " strangers from the covenants." The conditions are repentance toward God, faith in Jesus Christ, and a holy life. Upon these conditions are pledged, to the human parties in the covenant, pardon, regeneration, adoption, assurance, grace, blessing, and immortal life. To those who are " strangers from the covenants of promise," there is Divinely pledged nothing of good, and all of evil, for time and eternity. Whatever kindness they receive in this world, is owing to the uncovenanted mercy of God, and is designed to lead them to repentance. If



they do not thus receive and improve it, it adds to their guilt, and will deepen their doom. And all the time of their hesitation and delay they are liable to be suddenly cut off, and made strangers forever to the covenants of promise. They have no assurance of a single moment's grace or life. The wretch upon the scaffold, with the noose upon his neck and the drop falling, is safer than they: he only drops into eternity — they, certainly into hell. The solitary straggler in a lonely sea, who, exhausted and about to sink, sees just beneath him the expanded jaws of the ravenous shark, is safer than they: he can only die an instant, though horrid death — they must die forever; and though they see them not, the fangs of the undying worm are nearer still to them. The clumsy wretch who misses his footing on the verge of Ætna's crater, and tumbles headlong into the fiery abyss, is safer than they: he can only perish in the blazing cauldron of volcanic fire, — they must be plunged into a "lake of fire and brimstone," where they cannot die, but be tossed and driven forever in the churning waves of unquenchable fire. "Strangers from the covenants of promise!" The fabled hapless Jewish prince, driven, by the malediction of the long-suffering Christ, to wander always through the earth, a stranger in a world of strangers, is happier than they: for, though the weight of sorrowful centuries has wrinkled his brow and saddened his heart; though no touch of fellowship in kindred or kind can lighten the heavy burden of his grief; and though he must wander on while

time endures, restless, woeful, and alone ; yet time shall not always endure ; and he may look and listen for the trump of judgment and the funeral fires of the world, as the signals of his release ; but they must wander forever and forever, in the smoky, sulphurous, and blighted regions of the damned, where the only signal fires shall be those of an accumulating torment, and the only trumpet-calls the outcries of an immitigable and endless woe. And such "strangers from the covenants of promise" were we ; and this for some deep purpose the Apostle bids us remember to-day.

And further "that, at that time, we had no hope." Thank God, we knew not, in that hour, all the doom and danger of our lot ; or, in the madness of our despair, we must have plucked the imminent hell upon our own souls. We were somnambulists of time, risen, in our weird sleep of sin, from the peaceful couch of a happier destiny, and walking on the dizzy heights of eternal horror. To have awaked us all at once, would have been to destroy us. The suicides of religious despair are simply those wretches who were awaked too suddenly to a perception of the fearful dangers of their situation. When God in mercy led us from those "slippery places," it was by troubling our hearts with a gentle and rational fear and sorrow, under whose dominion we sought safety in the arms of Christ ; that at his quiet bidding, we might look back and behold — not without awful shuddering — the height and depth of our former perils. We have already surveyed some of them ; and we

come, now, to “remember that, at that time we were without hope in the world.” The inky blackness of a night of everlasting despair stretched from the horizon to the zenith, and from the zenith to the horizon again. No warm radiance of the Sun of Righteousness illumined us ; no star of promise shone even faintly, distantly, and coldly upon our path. For why, we had excluded them by our own hands. We had hung around the illuminating Cross the sullen and impenetrable drape of neglect. We had covered the starry memories of promise with the ashes of our contempt. We “had no hope in the world.” Of course we dreamed, then, that we did, indeed, possess all that we so utterly lacked. In our wild dreams, we saw the lost light of hope in everything. It seemed to us that there was hope in our life, our health, our riches, our honors, our pleasures, our friends, our knowledge, wisdom, and power ; but alas ! it was only a fleeting dream. Had we waked, in that hour, we must have realized what was simply true, — that our life was but another name for endless death ; that our health was hopeless, incurable, and mortal disease ; that our riches were winged devils, that mocked us with a seeming joy, but to deceive and hurry us to a swifter damnation ; that our honors were mingled of the upas of death and the nightshade of hell ; that our pleasures were the poisoned wines of sin, and every cup was death ; that our friends, if they were evil, like ourselves, would but double, by a painful sympathy, the anguish of our future doom,

and, if they were virtuous, unlike ourselves, would leave us for the bliss of God, and would bequeath us the pangs of an immortal bereavement; and that our knowledge, wisdom, and power would but deepen, explore, and concentrate upon our tortured consciousness the horrid revelations of perdition. Such was our condition, when "we had no hope in the world."

And now we touch the climax of the fearful scene, in the memory "that, at that time, we were without God in the world." And O, what is it to be "without God in the world?" It is to be the poorest thing in all the wide, wide universe, animate or inanimate, sentient or insensate. The rocks, and hills, and streams of earth have a God, and crystalize in beauty, and tower in majesty, and flow in music, at his will. The grass, and flowers, and forests have a God, and adorn the earth with verdure, and deck it with loveliness, and refresh it with odors, and cover it with strength and glory, at his bidding. The most minute and ephemeral forms of insect life, the birds, the beasts, the fishes, have a God, and obey his law. All the processes of nature and all the worlds of space have a God, and hold their course and places as He wills. All redeemed souls — infants, little children, and good men — have a God, and worship and obey Him, and confide in his love. The saints and angels in Glory have a God, and do his will perfectly, and find happiness and life in the doing. The devils in hell have a God, and tremble as they submit, by painful compulsion, to his holy will. Only an un-

converted sinner is "without God in the world." And this by his own fault: God has not forsaken him, but he has forgotten and forsaken God. He has wandered from the home of his innocence into the wilderness of sin, and is a lost child for evermore. Wild as the beasts around him, he hides and flies from every gentle influence. The angel friends whom he has left behind weep as they think of his forlorn wanderings, and seek him everywhere; but he will not be found. The tidings of his sad fate are tolled, in awful harmony, on all the bells in God's broad universe, and startle with thrills of painful sympathy the denizens of heaven, earth, and hell. For it is no common child that is lost, — no beggarly waif of being: he is the heir-apparent of Immortal Glory. Kingdoms and empires seek him, and all in vain. Kingdoms and empires, crowns and thrones, are offered in reward for finding him, and all in vain. He will not be found. The Son of God Himself adventures into fearful peril to rescue him, encounters and slays his deadliest enemies, and then, all wounded and bleeding, calls him in a voice of agony through the universe. He will not answer; he will not be found. And lo, fierce, frantic fratricide, parricide, and regicide in one! From a cave of guilt where he lay concealed, he has hurled the weapon which quivers in the heart of his dying Saviour. Ah! he is doubly, trebly, and forever lost. Henceforth he is "without God in the world." And such, at that time, were we.

In the latter part of the text, we are furnished

with the ground of the Apostle's strange exhortation; with the reason for summoning, out of the sepulchred past, these frightful ghosts of memory: "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Thanks be to God for his unspeakable goodness to us! "Far off," indeed! to wit, "without Christ," "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," "strangers from the covenants of promise," "having no hope," "without God in the world," and momentarily exposed to be plunged by death into that inexorable hell of distance, and sealed unto everlasting damnation! I have been, on several occasions, in peril of instant and violent death; separated by an inch of space, and less than a second of time, from destruction. The nerve held while the peril lasted, and I turned coolly and half carelessly to the means of safety. But, once escaped, to look back upon the danger was awful. The brain reeled, and the heart turned sick at the thought. But never yet the sense of peril past hath moved me as the sense of this immortal peril past moves me to-day. And you, Christian brother, sympathize with me in this shuddering sense of safety. We hug ourselves in ecstasy of thought that the peril *is* past, and give glory to God. Once, on such an escape as that to which I have alluded, my first and only utterance was, "Thank God!" Wicked men who heard the words did not deem them strange or misplaced, but turned, with pale, quivering lips, to grasp me by the hand. Deem it not strange, then, that to-day, from a deep

sense of an immeasurable peril past, we cry, from the depth of our grateful hearts, "Thank God!" And this was the first and great end which St. Paul sought to accomplish, by summoning us to these sad and awful remembrances; that we might appreciate, understand, and rejoice in the salvation of Christ; that our hearts might be melted into tenderness of grateful worship, while we realize that we have been "brought nigh by the blood of Christ;" so "nigh" that Christ is become our personal Saviour and Friend; so "nigh" that we are fellow-citizens, with the saints, of the Kingdom of God, and members of the Household of Faith; so "nigh" that we are parties to "the covenants of promise," and heirs of all their splendid and immortal pledges; so "nigh" that we have a good "hope," full of peace, joy, and comfort, in this world, and taking hold of eternal happiness in the world to come; so "nigh" that God, the self-existent and eternal, is our Father, Helper, and Friend forever. Let us, therefore, with calm and tranquil joy, magnify the Lord our Saviour.

But another result, growing out of this ardent appreciation of the blessedness of Christ's salvation, is to put us in effective sympathy with the unconverted, and prepare us to labor for their salvation. In looking upon those places of giddy peril, from which our souls were snatched by the gracious hand of God, we see them occupied by a world of careless and thoughtless sinners. Looking closer, we recognize among them acquaintances and friends. Looking still closer, we see there, all

unconscious of their danger, wrapped in the weird somnambulism of sin, our own parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. What, then, can we do, but fall down on our knees, and beg, in unutterable anguish of earnest interest, of the same gracious Hand that availed for us, an interposition in their behalf? What can we do but beckon, warn, entreat, implore? Alas! they see us not, they hear us not. Only the voice of God's pleading Spirit can arouse them; only the touch of Christ's unsealing finger can open their blinded eyes. We must summon these celestial Agencies to their rescue, or they will be lost. Let us "give ourselves unto prayer." It is our only hope, our only help. Yet, as we regard their immortal lives, let us pray that none of them be suddenly and fully roused to see all his peril, lest the sight should madden him, and he leap over the precipice of suicide into the gulf of hell.



## XIV.

### SPECIAL PROVIDENCE.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” — *MATT. vi. 33.*

IT is not to be denied that it is a question, in many minds, whether or not there be such a thing in this world as Particular Providence; whether the righteous man is more blessed and prospered than other men, because of his righteousness, and the wicked more cursed and afflicted, because of his wickedness. Of this question, we take the affirmative, and shall endeavor to show, from the joint testimony of Scripture, reason, observation, experience, common sense, and consciousness, that there is such a distinction in the Divine government, in favor of the righteous and opposed to the wicked. With general providence, we have nothing to do in this discussion, except by way of reference or explanation. It may safely be taken for granted that nobody doubts of this; since it has been conceded by all infidels even, who did not lack understanding to perceive that the First Cause must be the Parent, either directly or remotely, of all effects. The only question, indeed, between the Deist and the Christian, on the doctrine of general providence, is, whether the Divine Being be personally and effi-

ciently present and operative in the control of human affairs, or has committed their course and keeping to inflexible laws, and retired from the scene. With regard to Particular Providence, which the Christian holds, the Deist opposes here an unqualified denial; and in this denial he is sustained by the unspoken suffrages of nearly everybody outside the Church, and a majority of those within her pale of membership. It may be thought that this is an overstatement; but having made the canvass, with some years of observation and experience as a pastor, I am satisfied that the facts will sustain the assertion. And how, it may be asked, has so much infidelity found its way into the Church? A little reflection on the part of those who make the inquiry would render all questions needless; for so many doors are open between the Church and the world, that it can be no matter of legitimate surprise that the tide of worldly sentiment and opinion should run in. In the first place, few professors of religion study the Bible enough to know what its teachings really are on this point; and how shall they receive what has never been revealed — to them? In the second place, many others have no rational conviction of the Divine authenticity of the Holy Scriptures. Whatever opinion they have on this subject they inherited — imbibed — from domestic tradition. Their parents believed it; and so do they, after a sort; but they have no idea of its evidences — could not for their lives mention one of them, and can have, therefore, no great veneration for the doctrines of a Book of whose ori-

gin, even, they are not distinctly assured. In the third place, a majority of the members of all the churches are anything but Christians (if by their fruits we may know them); and it is hardly to be wondered at that they should hesitate to receive a doctrine which, if true, consigns them to the corrective temporal judgments of Heaven. In the fourth place, as it is impossible to say, from their church relations merely, who are and who are not Christians, it is correspondingly difficult to determine, from observation, whether Providence really does favor the good; and hence many candid persons are embarrassed in their faith. From these, and perhaps other circumstances, the prevalent sentiment of the Church even, to-day, is skeptical with regard to the doctrine of Particular Providence; and we come now to set down before this citadel of their unbelief, with all the enginery of truth within our command; that we may, if possible, kindly compel some to believe what it will forever ruin them to reject.

We hope and believe that we do not mistake the point of real difficulty in the establishment of this doctrine. We are aware of certain good consequences, in a temporal view, which attend the virtues of honesty, industry, temperance, benevolence, and some others, whether these virtues have their home in the breast of a Christian or an infidel; and that, were we to devote the present discourse to the establishment of such a connection between virtue and prosperity, we should set up what nobody denies, and overthrow, not a real adversary

of the truth, but only our own worthless man of straw. The question in dispute is whether, in this life, there be a special and efficient Divine interposition to bless a higher and deeper piety than this, and to punish all grades of wickedness, including the loftiest and purest mere morality.

But ere we proceed to either proof or argument, it is necessary that we reach a common understanding of two terms, which must be frequently employed, both in the testimony and the discussion: these are, the "righteous" and the "wicked," and their Scriptural synonyms. Who is a righteous man? and who is a wicked man? according to the Scriptures? The answer shall be simple, and such, we trust, as will secure the assent of every mind. He is a righteous man, who so repents of his sins, and so believes in Christ, as to secure personal pardon and the renewal of his nature by the Holy Ghost, and who afterwards lives in humble obedience to the commands of God; and he is a wicked man who — whatever else he does or leaves undone — fails thus to repent, believe, be pardoned, renewed, and live a life of holy obedience to Christ. Although this answer be in such obvious accordance with the Scriptures as seemingly to need no support, we desire, for the benefit of any caviler, to recite these familiar declarations: "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." "He that believeth not, shall be damned." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "He that saith, I know Him,

and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

Having settled these preliminary points, we ought, perhaps, in strict propriety, first to question the Bible for the truth of the doctrine of Particular Providence. But, for the present, — and reserving this branch of the testimony for future and more extended reference and adduction, — we are content to remark, on this point, that every promise of temporal good and every threat of temporal evil which the Book contains, and nearly every incident illustrative of either which it records, is in proof of this doctrine. Either, then, this is true; or the whole Book is a fable and a blind; calculated to deceive alike the careless reader and the earnest student. Are we not, then, rationally shut up to an election between a hearty acceptance of this doctrine, and an unqualified rejection of the Bible as the Word of God?

And what is there unreasonable in the proposition? that we should so start back and refuse to acknowledge that God, in his providence, makes a difference in favor of those who love and obey Him, and against those who rebel and will not serve Him? The first and most popular objection is, that this difference cannot be readily discerned; that it is not miraculously manifested, as it was in former times; and, it is thought, as it might and would be now, if it were true, and if God wished to commend it to the faith of men. We may remark, here, that however consistent this

objection may be with the views of avowed unbelievers, it must simply disgrace the professor of religion who utters it; for has he not subscribed to this doctrine again and again, both tacitly and formally? Has he not solemnly taken the Word of God as the only and sufficient rule of his faith? And is not this doctrine plainly and amply set forth in the Bible? How then shall any man, who names Christ with ostensible love and reverence, dare for very shame, to intimate a doubt of the truth of the doctrine of Special Providence? — unless, indeed, he be an inquirer, just starting in the Christian life, and honestly seeking an issue, out of the mist and gloom of all mental uncertainty, into the broad light of implicit and unwavering faith. Then, indeed, his doubts do him honor; and the Church should gladly help him with all the proofs and arguments within her reach.

But we submit, further, for the consideration of those church-members who do not heartily embrace this doctrine, that their doubts take away the very ground-work of their Christianity; for implicit trust in the Particular Providence of God is one of the terms of genuine repentance and faith. No man *can* repent or believe, to the saving of his soul, standing on any other ground of trust. And the reason is obvious. Man makes an idol of the things of this world; gives them his time, thoughts, talents, all; in a word, worships them. But these things perish in the using; and cannot make him happy here; if there were

no hereafter. God compassionates and proposes to relieve, to elevate, to redeem him; but it is on condition that he cease to seek these, and seek only Him. Can man comply with this condition? Can he give his mind, time, energies, all to spiritual objects, unless he believes that God will take especial care of his temporal interests? Certainly he cannot. And it is in gracious condescension to this fact of our nature, that we are everywhere, in the Bible, so explicitly assured that, if we give our hearts to God, He will provide specially and peculiarly for us. This is why Christ says, "Seek ye first — or above and beyond all else — the kingdom of God, and all these temporal comforts, after which unbelievers seek, shall be added unto you." Then, is it not clear that whoever says, "I do not believe in the Special Providence of God," says also, by implication, to all reflecting people, "I have not given my heart to God — I am yet in my sins?"

But to return to the objection: "The Particular Providence of God, in behalf of Christians and against sinners, is not obvious." So thought and said those who lived in the earlier ages of the world. There was as much incredulity then as now. The Egyptians, after a series of miraculous judgments, did not yet believe that God was the especial Friend of the Israelites and their Enemy; nor would they believe it, till God overthrew their king and all his host in the Red Sea. The children of Israel, themselves, did not cordially embrace it; and hence God slew them, by pesti-

lence and sword, and finally scattered them throughout the world. From all which it would appear, that miraculous providences are not necessarily productive of genuine and saving faith; and that were the Almighty to multiply these wonders, it is by no means certain that He would thereby benefit the human race. It is a simple fact — attested by all history — that the efficacy of God's wonderful judgments in leading men to repentance, is greatly owing to their infrequency. "Could we believe," says Richard Watson, "only those spiritual truths which we saw miraculously attested, there would come to be, at last, neither miracles nor faith; since that which was common would be no miracle, and would produce neither terror, surprise, nor conviction."

We have never thought much of the argument, that whoever consents to a general providence, must also admit a special; because, as it is held, the special is, by force of terms, included in and constitutes the general. This may serve to silence objectors; but it fails to convince them. The truth is, some clearer analysis is needed; by which the special Divine interference may be distinguished from the general Divine efficiency. And in order to compass, as far as we may, so desirable an end, we suggest — with Isaac Taylor, following here his masterly analysis and using some even of his admirable expressions — that all life's events are made up of two classes: those which may, and those which may not, be fore-known by human sagacity. On the former class,



are built all rational calculations of comfort and prosperity. The farmer knows when to sow and plant. The merchant understands the market, and knows how and when to invest. The lawyer is familiar with precedents and the rules of evidence, and can calculate their probable influence upon the issue in hand. The doctor recognizes the symptoms of disease, and can foresee the probable effects of his medicines. These all are parts of the general providence of God. But what farmer has not been disappointed in his hopes of harvest, by the drought or flood? What merchant or capitalist has not felt the effects of fire, or fraud, or a sudden fluctuation in the market? What lawyer has not mislaid his brief, or forgotten or neglected a point, or lost a paper, which has cost him his case? What doctor has not mistaken the symptoms of disease, by an unhappy chance, and only killed where he came to cure? Now these accidents, chances, fortuities — or whatever we choose to name them — are the sphere of the special providence of God. These are the stores from which Infinite Efficiency draws its rewards for the good and its punishments for the bad; while the Divine hand which thus blesses or chastises, is seldom or never seen. We repeat, that the teaching of the Scriptures and what all Christians must maintain is, that out of this store-house of fortuities, God draws special deliverances for his own people, and extraordinary troubles for the wicked. And who is there who, if he reflects, will not be forced to admit that his career, his life, his

character, have been more deeply and permanently affected by some most unexpected incidents, than by all the events which he could have predicted? And now if he will still further recall the moral drift of all these seeming chances; that they came from one direction, and point to a single end; that they have seemed, at times, to have solemn voices, like the tones of his better angel summoning him to duty; if he will recall and reflect upon these things, he will find them, all at once, invested with the attributes of intelligence and power; and will look up in humble adoration of the particular providence of his God.

But a new question will arise here, in some minds: what is the breadth of that tide of fortuitous circumstance that flows through the world to refresh and bless the good, and to overwhelm and sweep away the bad. It is not to be denied that those things deemed and termed accidental, are the simple effects of natural causes, though the connection lies beyond our power to discern. In the bursting, for example, of an iron shell filled with explosive materials, every seeming chance fragment — whether buried in earth or hurled a measureless distance in ether, or unsealing the red tide of human life — undoubtedly obeys a law; and did we perfectly understand that law, we might accurately foresee all the effects of the explosion. So “the pestilence that walketh at midnight” unseen by human eye, and “the destruction that wasteth at noon-day” — caring naught for human resistance — and every accidental dis-

ease and circumstance of violence by which the life of man or beast is imperilled or destroyed, has its immediate cause, which is first published to us by the effect, and which then seems easily evitable. "I see," says the doctor, turning away from his dying patient,—“I see now, how I might have saved him.” “I see,” says the statesman, whose country is ruined or disgraced, — “I see now the point of my divergence from that high path which led to her safety and her glory.” “I see,” says the chieftain, looking upon the wounds of his living and the bodies of his dead soldiers — the wreck of his defeated and broken and scattered army, — “I see now how I lost the battle; and how I might have won it.” And thus it is, that men come to believe, seeing that all events seem to depend on second causes, that God never interferes. They are partly right and partly wrong. Nearly if not quite all life's events do depend on second causes. But in what follows, namely, that therefore they ought to conclude God never interferes, they are wholly wrong: wrong because they contradict Him, who assures them that he does interfere; wrong because they contradict reason, which teaches them that He may interpose without visibly or palpably manifesting his agency to them; and that He ought to exert his power, when the good would otherwise suffer and the evil triumph. Why should He do open violence to the constitution of Nature, when He would regulate her course and motion with reference to human contingencies and for moral ends? Would He

not be a most clumsy Artist, if He could not put his hand to his own work without setting the whole machinery ajar, breaking its order and marring its harmony? And are we not most ignorant and unreflecting spectators when, because we cannot *see* his hand, we stupidly conclude that it is not there, though all the *results* declare it?

Let it be supposed — for the purpose of obtaining a bird's-eye view of a scene otherwise too extended for our imperfect mental vision — that there existed, at this time, and in the room in which we are now sitting, a being in the form of man, of sufficient resources — power, wisdom, goodness — to create and exhibit in a moment, before our eyes, a miniature world; that it were peopled with men and animals and formed, in all respects, an exact counterpart of the one on which we live; that it had its brief seasons, its storms, its sunshine, its peace and war, its joy and sorrow; and all so arranged that the little men and women, who lived and loved and hated and died upon its surface, could not *see* the Hand that created and upheld them, and controlled and influenced all their affairs, while we could see it all very plainly; how the loving eye of the Master took in everything — knew and rewarded the good and punished the bad, through the laws, agencies, and instrumentalities of their own little world — Himself all the while unseen; never jarring violently, or disturbing, the even course of its affairs. And let it be supposed, that we could understand the language of this tiny race, and catch the drift of

their thoughts and conversation ; that their origin, destiny, and dependence upon the Hand that formed them, had been clearly and authentically revealed to them ; and that yet, — because the Power which controlled and regulated their affairs for moral and beneficent ends operated through familiar instrumentalities, and they could not see it bare and terrible on every occasion of its display, — that therefore some little philosopher, among them, should propound the theory that there was really no such governing Power in existence ; and that the great majority of the little folk, who heard him, should consent to what he said, and agree to deny, along with him, their constant dependence upon, and moral training under that Power whose application we all the time could plainly see. Should we not smile at a delusion so silly, and wonder how it was possible that it should take such deep hold upon creatures as rational as ourselves ? O ! to those higher Intelligences who stand in the broad light of God's providence to men, how stupid must seem the conclusions of our human reason !

But there is a class of minds whose conjectures, started by this apparent dependence of all events upon second causes, soar still further into the dim regions of speculation, and become involved in wider and deeper perplexities. They find themselves involuntarily dwelling upon such questions as these : “ How know I that those events which obey a law of necessity are limited to the material world ? Are there not, between this and the

spiritual, such strong analogies as render their similarity of constitution, and corresponding dependence upon law, extremely probable? Is not action the necessary effect of volition? Is not volition the necessary consequence of motive? Is not motive the necessary result of circumstances? And may not all circumstance be necessitated? Really, and truly, and philosophically, is there such a thing as contingency in the world?"

It may be thought singular that we should start such a question here; one so difficult and purely metaphysical, and into the discussion of which, besides, we have not time to adventure at any length. But when we remember that this point is always made, by those more cultivated and thoughtful intellects which hesitate to receive the doctrine of Particular Providence; and when we reflect that if it have any weight, or seem in the least degree probable, that whole doctrine must fall to the ground — at least in the conclusions of such minds — as a simple absurdity, we shall see that the discussion of this subject would have been, without such allusion, to say the least, incomplete.

For the present we have but a single word of answer to all such speculations; and it lies in the fact — patent to all observation and the earliest, latest, and most constant testimony of consciousness — that *Mind*, wherever it exists and in whatever degree, is a *power*; — an original, self-moving, self-controlling, self-willing power; — that it is anterior to motive, superior to it, and can and

does always increase or diminish its influence at pleasure. And we confirm this truth by the challenge that no rational man ever succeeded for ten consecutive minutes in making himself believe its converse. God has mercifully set before that precipice of error the guardian-angel Consciousness; who will not let us cast ourselves down. But there is danger, if we linger about the fatal brink and wait till the watchman slumbers, that we may pass him unheeded, and take our frenzied leap into the gulf of Madness.

Thus, all rational pursuit of moral truth must start from the platform of the open and patent contingencies of life. And starting from this point, we desire to be informed what there is in the doctrine of God's Particular Providence to men, which does not bring, in confirmation and attestation of its Divine seal, the sanction of the highest and purest attributes of reason!

We have first the strong presumption, based upon the revealed character of the Creator and Governor of all, and upon the existing constitution of things, that according to our Divinely imparted ideas of right and justice, God ought to, and therefore would interfere frequently to deliver his own faithful servants from the machinations of the wicked. Since he lacks not the will to do it, nor the power to do it; and since the doing of it would better consist with that high estimate of his character for wisdom and goodness with which He Himself has possessed us: is it not fair to conclude that — from a proper regard

for the consistency of his character as shown in Providence, with the same character as revealed in the Bible — God should and would, in the quality and significance of those events which it is admitted He either directly or indirectly produces and controls, illustrate the sanctions eternally affixed to the law which governs moral agents ?

And when we further reflect that the human race, as a whole, stand in the utmost need of those illustrations ; that hell has thrown itself upon the earth with a shock which has jarred it from its place and harmony with God and heaven ; that its original constitution — as written by the finger of creative Power upon its fair and lovely features — has been so mutilated and defaced by the hoof-prints of the fiends who have long usurped its possession and control, that men, even the wisest and best, can with difficulty make out its meaning ; that it is full of ignorance, idolatry, licentiousness, and blood ; — when we think of these things, what reason can look upon God as the calm, uninterested, unmoved Spectator of a scene which, without conflict with any principle of his Government, He might remedy, in large degree, by a Special Providence ?

We have in the second place, in support of this view, a rational construction and interpretation of the accidents of life. Why should there be such events ? Why should chance have power to defeat our best-laid schemes ? Why are not human calculations always justified by their result ? — as it is admitted they commonly are ? Has any philos-



opher ever told us why? Would there not exist — then and in that case — the pure and exclusive general providence for which he so strenuously contends? Why should this providence be interrupted, marred, defeated, by events so unexpected and out of rule as utterly to baffle all human sagacity? But the philosopher will repeat his old formula: “It *must* be so.” But why must it be so? What is the moral ground of this assumed necessity? There can be no physical necessity, since we speak of the effects of a Power whose wish can wither or create a material universe. Why, then, should we not have a perfect general providence, unmarred by the cruel fortuities of life? Why this accumulation of chances — this magazine of accidents? Can human ingenuity assign even a plausible reason, aside from the moral condition and circumstances of the race, which render the Particular Providence of God an essential condition of the experiment of man’s continued being on the earth? Then, let it be remembered that upon the front of every chance which crosses the threshold of our consciousness, there is inscribed a name: “The Angel of Special Providence.”

And this title all the effects of chance will justify. On this point recollection and reflection must stand for all argument: and we invite every candid mind to the experiment. Let any man, saint or sinner, gather in one group the accidents of his life — or so many of them as will obey the summons of memory — and question them of

their mission to him: with one voice they will reply and in a tone which will scatter his scepticism to the winds, "We came to lead you, through repentance and faith, to God; we came to guide you to heaven."

We have in the third place, in support of this view, the instinctive recognition of its truth by all wicked men, when visited by calamity. The skeptical gentleman who lives at his ease, surrounded by all the luxuries and delights of wealth; or rejoices in the honorable toils of a noble profession; or exults in the precarious rewards of popular favor; while the caressing hands of Love and the supporting arms of Friendship surround and embrace him; may, while thus filled and thrilled with all the joys of possession, doubt of the Special Providence of God, and think and say that all has fallen out according to his own wise foresight and prudent energy; but when war, or fire, or flood, or fraud has beggared him; when professional success has forsaken him for his rival; when his popular honors have been transferred to other brows; when Love is dead and buried, and Friendship has deceived, deserted, and betrayed him: then, *then*, he never fails to recognize and acknowledge the particular providence of God; whether in angry complaints or in the tones of humble and pious submission, it matters nothing, it is of equal value to the argument; in calamity, he kneels or cowers to the Providence which he denied in prosperity.

So the successful villain who dedicates his life to fraud and theft and robbery and rapine ; or wreaks his fierce revenge in murder ; or roams the ocean under the pirate's flag ; while yet for a time he is successful ; while his guilty hoards increase, and no sword of justice seems to hang, hair-suspended, above his head ; ere yet the blood upon his hand has become a "damned spot" which will not "out" at the bidding of his spirit's wildest and strongest remorse ; ere yet it has eaten into his soul, and poisoned his dreams, and made his life one long, long agony ; while yet his swift keel ploughs the wave, and his blood-red pennant floats above him, the terror of the world's commerce, may, while thus unchecked in his career, laugh at the teachings of the Christian pulpit, and defy the Heavens. But when the form of even that human Justice which is but a faint and sickly symbol of the Divine, rises suddenly and severely in his path ; when he finds himself imprisoned and manacled, and his family impoverished and disgraced ; when he stands upon the scaffold, to look his last upon the sun and sky ; when the lightnings have riven and fired his blood-stained deck ; then, *then* the robber, the *murderer*, the **PIRATE!** talks of the judgments of Heaven ; and what is this, but to talk of the Special Providence of God ? O ! it would seem as if a Divine hand did sometimes almost visibly tear from the eyes of Skepticism and Crime — despite the wildest cavils of the one and the darkest deeds of the other — the blinding webs which sophistry and success

had woven there, that for one fearful moment between time and eternity they might come into the court of Human Reason, and with the white and trembling lips of the doomed dead, bear witness to the truth of God's Particular Providence to men!

We have in the fourth place, in support of this view, the official indorsement of every enlightened nation on the globe. What is the meaning of those proclamations which come from the seat of government of every nation where civilization has triumphed over barbarism and progressed into enlightenment, alike when prosperity blesses and when adversity threatens, and which, in most reverent and solemn tones summon the people of the land to the altars of God for thanksgiving, humiliation, and prayer? What is the meaning of those permanent records to be found in the judicial, legislative, and executive departments of all these governments, and of those official dispatches which come flying even from the camp and the battlefield, in which the issues of war and the absolute and special control of the destinies of nations are referred to Heaven? Whence arises that strange inconsistency in the conduct of some infidel statesmen, which impels them, when they reach that political elevation whence they can look out over the nations, however the act may conflict with the cherished and avowed principles of their lives, to acknowledge publicly the Special Providence of God in the affairs of those nations? What mean these national acknowledgments of Particu-

lar Providence? Is all this the language of hypocritical mummery, or is it the utterance of the conscience of all lands? If the latter, in one thing, at least, "the voice of the people is the voice of God."

And now can we longer withhold — from the truth of a doctrine which is clearly and explicitly taught in the Bible; which is strengthened by a rational interpretation of the accidents of our individual lives; which is confirmed by every reasonable presumption of which the case admits; which is sanctioned by the honest utterances of all hearts in times of trouble, and which is sealed with the official acknowledgments of all the enlightened nations of the earth — our cordial, full, and final consent? Or will we not rather say to the skeptical fiend that has so long beset us, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" stand no longer in the light of my faith! darken no longer my prospect of God and Heaven! for henceforth I will see, and seeing worship, that divine Father whose tender care and watchful providence arrange and control the events of life, to discipline my wild and untamed spirit for the mightier tasks reserved for its energies in the eternal world?"

But it further seems natural that we should desire to be assured, and proper that the pulpit should endeavor, to the extent of its resources, to satisfy us, how far the Special Providence of God is intended to affect, and does actually influence, the temporal fortunes of its subjects; in other words, upon how much of Divine assistance we are

authorized to count, rationally and Scripturally, upon condition of our faithful compliance with all the requirements of Heaven. And for this reason: God would never have proposed that we should enter his service on terms of temporal advantage to ourselves, without intending that we should weigh and appreciate that advantage. But He has, in clear and express terms, set before our obedience a temporal blessing, and before our disobedience a temporal curse; undoubtedly that we might be led by the one to holiness, and repelled by the other from sin. But our attraction to good, or our repulsion from evil, will be in a proportion strictly exact to our appreciation of the blessing and our terror of the curse. Now this temporal blessing for the good, and this temporal curse for the evil, constitute the Particular Providence of God: they are the hands with which He produces and controls events with reference to moral ends; and it is therefore our right and duty, if we may, to assure ourselves how far they reach. We have already established — if there be reliableness in reason when acting within Scriptural limits and under Scriptural sanctions — the fact of Special Providence. Let us then take, for our postulate in what remains to be said, this truth: that God produces and controls the events of life, with reference to human contingencies and moral ends, so as, in greater or less degree, especially to bless the good, and peculiarly to punish the bad, and proceed to inquire how great is that degree.

There are four circumstances, in one or more, or

all of which Special Providence touches men, or it touches them in nothing: these are sustenance, health, safety, and social enjoyment; and besides these, there are no other appreciable points of contact between a Divine temporal blessing or curse and a human agent. The question is, to how many of these does the Divine smile or frown extend? and how far are they affected by either or both?

It is written, "Behold I set before you a blessing and a curse: a blessing if ye obey, a curse if ye will not obey." "If ye obey, the Lord shall make you plenteous in goods, and in all the works of your hands; but if ye will not obey, all these curses" — naming almost every conceivable evil — "shall come upon you." "If ye obey and serve Him, ye shall spend your days in prosperity and your years in pleasures; but if ye obey not, ye shall perish by the sword." "Whatsoever the righteous man doeth shall prosper; but the ungodly are not so." "The righteous shall be fed in the days of famine; but the wicked shall perish." "Because thou hast made the Lord thy refuge, there shall no evil befall thee; only shalt thou see the reward of the wicked." "Whoso hearkeneth unto Me, shall dwell safely; but the wicked shall be cut off from the earth." And it is said by Him who is the Truth, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things" — plenty, health, safety, happiness — "shall be added unto you."

Thus far the Bible, by whose express terms God

is pledged for the sustenance, health, safety, and social enjoyment of those who trust and obey him. It is written, "They shall have plenty." It is written, "I will take sickness away from the midst of them." It is written, "They shall be safe." It is written, "They shall spend their years in pleasures." And all because of their righteousness. And so of the wicked it is written, "They shall hunger, and thirst, and want." It is written, "They shall suffer pain, disease, and pestilence." It is written, "They shall be wounded and slain by the sword." It is written, "They shall cry for sorrow of heart." And all because of their wickedness. To the humble believer in the Scriptures, then, the controversy is ended, since God has spoken; but even he may desire explanations, and there are others who would like to ask questions.

And first, "do I understand you to teach that God engages that the Christian shall be rich?" By no means. On the contrary, the Bible forbids most Christians to be rich. It forbids all to seek riches. It forbids all to accumulate riches. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth" is the Divine command; accompanied and enforced by the philosophic sanction, "for where your treasure is there will your heart be also." We can conceive of but three ways in which a Christian may innocently become rich: by gift, inheritance, or accident. And even then he may not suffer his riches to accumulate. And he who makes himself rich — who by agricultural, mechanical, professional, mercantile, or speculative gains, accumulates and



keeps in his possession more than enough for the supply of his reasonable wants, is disobeying the command of Christ, and rearing a golden barrier between his soul and Heaven more solid and impassible, I doubt not, than any other which Satanic hands and ingenuity can build. And the reason is obvious. He who accumulates wealth becomes, by simple virtue of the process, its slave. Avarice is his ruling passion. Mammon is his god. "It is easier" — if we will accept for testimony the oath of the divine Son — "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." No, God does not promise the Christian riches; but He does promise him plenty and prosperity; and He will always make good that pledge.

Indeed, why should it not be so? Since the very terms on which he becomes a Christian imply the faithful use of all the means by which plenty is commonly secured; since the God who supplies every creature's wants is his special Friend; since He cannot lack resources, even in the greatest emergencies, to fulfill his word; and since such supply will render the true Christian more useful, and holy, and grateful, and happy; why should not all his temporal wants be amply supplied?

"Undoubtedly," the objector will reply, "there is no reason why God should not take care of the Christian, to the extent which you suppose. But that is not the question. *Does* He so far provide? is rather the point in dispute. And somewhat unfortunately for your theory there exist, under com-

mon observation, instances of Christians living in the greatest straits of poverty. And to put the matter beyond all question, can you deny that the beggar Lazarus, who lay at the rich man's gate, and fed with the dogs upon the crumbs from his table, was a Christian? How, then, does such a circumstance, if there were no other, comport with your doctrine of Special Providence?"

Before answering the objector fully, we beg leave to remind him of two circumstances. First, the doctrine which I defend and enforce is not mine, but God's; set forth in the Scriptures in terms which he who disputes may as reasonably question any and all other teachings of the Book. And secondly, the proof of one or several instances, merely exceptional to the mass of facts, does not invalidate the common rule of their interpretation. But we are not willing to concede that, in this case, the objector has found even an exception to the rule. And in order that we may be fully understood on this point, and not have Lazarus thrown again in the face of our argument, we desire to suggest a twofold distinction between Christians, which common sense and observation will not fail to sanction. There are, then, in the world, Christians of sound and vigorous mental and physical constitution, who can work wisely and efficiently with reference to any desirable end of human effort; and there are others of unsound mental or physical constitution, or both, who either cannot work at all, or cannot work wisely and efficiently so as to secure the objects which they de-

sire and intend. Now the heavenly Father exercises over both these classes the same Special Providence; albeit, like the bearing of an earthly parent towards his maimed or deformed child, it may be tenderer towards these helpless ones. But He will work no miracle in their behalf. Broken in constitution or feeble in mind, whether from inherited weakness or previous imprudence, it matters not, the feeble in mind is feeble still, after his conversion to Christianity as before; the lazar is a lazar still; though to both the hour approaches — how gladly welcomed who but they can know? — when angel hands shall transport them from the gates of Dives, and the sneering sympathies of men, to a home “in Abraham’s bosom.” But on all these, while they linger in the world, falls the benison of Heaven’s Special Providence; seen not less distinctly by the eye of pious Faith — and we might add, and do aver, of sound Reason — in the crumbs which reach them from the tables of the rich, and in the dumb ministers whose caresses soothe their anguish, than in the higher health and energy and more abundant fortunes of the chosen vessels of Heaven. Religion does not make a lazar, nor unmake him; but it can and does bless him on earth, and recompense him in Heaven.

But there remains to be noticed, for the complete understanding of this point, another distinction between Christians, based on moral grounds. Among those called by the Christian name, some — a very few it must be confessed — are Scriptural Christians; entirely devoted to the service of

God. Now these, and these only, comply with the conditions on which God has promised constantly to provide for their temporal wants. And did any one ever hear of such a Christian forsaken in trouble by friends and Heaven? Did any one ever hear of such a Christian's children, even, "begging bread?" If so, his observation has been more extensive than was that of the old prophet, warrior, and poet-king of Israel; who testified to the Special Providence of God, in behalf of the truly righteous, in these very terms.

But there is another and much larger class of Christians, who only rise periodically and for a longer or shorter space of time, according to temperament and circumstances, to the discharge of every Christian duty and the full consecration of themselves to God. Now these, if Christians at all in a strict sense, are such only occasionally and at intervals. They may have been genuinely converted; but in a few weeks or months, they lose their first love. They may be revived again and again, and set out anew to serve God with all their hearts; but the high purpose soon dies: they become cold, backslidden, selfish, worldly. It cannot be questioned — by any one who studies the word of God and thinks — that the greater part of such lives is spent in sin; and that by consequence, God is absolved from all obligation to bless these persons with temporal prosperity, save only during those intervals in which they serve Him with all their hearts. On the contrary He is expressly pledged — and the pledge is sanctioned by reason

and benevolence — to afflict them with temporal chastisement, in order to bring them back to duty. Let there be a perpetual end, then, to that false and shallow cry against the doctrine of Special Providence, that “some very good Christians are afflicted as much as other people!” They are unfortunate because of incapacity; or they are afflicted because of their sins; because they are *not* Christians, and not because they *are*. And here I may be justified in an appeal to the personal consciousness of every individual who knows, in himself, that he belongs to this class of Christians. Say, then, if during the hours or days of your intimate union with God and communion with Christ, all temporal things, even, did not go well with you? — if Mercy were not written on every hour, and on every event? — and if, during those supreme moments of your life, when you rose to breathe the purer atmosphere and look upon the cloudless prospect of spiritual things, there ever swept athwart your soul one shadow of doubt of the particularly kind providence of God to you?

But there is still another class of Christians who comprise, unfortunately for the Church and the world, an overwhelming majority of all the professors of godliness on the earth. These all are strangers to vital piety. A few of them may be able to recall a time when they were, as they thought, truly religious; but that time has long passed. They are now, and have been for years, completely and hopelessly backslidden. They have lost the desire, and ceased to make the effort, to be-

come Christians; yet they are very good people, too, they think. Conscience does not 'reprove them: the reason why, she dares not! There was a time when she uttered her warning voice; but they so maltreated and abused her, that she is afraid. They put out her eyes, and stopped her ears, and cut out her tongue, and seared her with the world's hot iron, till she is dumb! — dumb till the judgment! And so they think that they are very good people indeed. Theirs is a rational and practical and practicable view of religion; it is that of the majority; it will do very well; and if all is not quite right — as they are sometimes inclined to suspect — they will make it up by a little extra preparation when they come to die! Others have joined the Church from interested motives, because it will help them along in life, and at the same time, as they imagine, help them to heaven at last. Others have been led by sympathy with their religious friends, to unite with them in a Christian profession. Others intend to gain heaven by their good works; and joining the Church is the first step. Others have no motive at all, except that such a course is fashionable and seemly for persons of their position in life. Others are enthusiasts and fanatics. Others are formalists. And still others — a very few, for the honor of human nature, we would fain hope and do believe — are double-dyed hypocrites; confessing, even to themselves, no motive but interest, and laughing, in their hearts, at all the idle mummeries of religion, which they practice with such

solemn faces. Now, I need hardly say, that the outward lives of many of this numerous class are as consistent as those of true Christians. They are as diligent, as honest, as sober, as generous, as faithful in observances; and some of them — the hypocrites — are the very loudest of all professors of religion. Like all who act a part, they overact it. But it suffices to deceive the careless and little-judging world. They are set down, in the mass, as so many Christians. But is it not plain that they are sinners? Is it not plain that they are the worst of sinners? Is it not plain that they more dishonor God, and more vitally injure his cause, than all the world besides? What does He owe them then? A Special Providence? Yes; but its rewards are punishments; its treasures are judgments; its notices are afflictions. Of all men and women, upon whom the curse of disobedience falls in this life, ought it not to fall heaviest upon them? But the world is deceived; because some of them are reckoned eminent Christians — among the best; and they themselves are led to doubt of the Special Providence of God! It is a mystery which they cannot understand; why if God specially provides for the good, such superlatively good people as they should be deprived of the benefit of such an arrangement! Let us not then hereafter — unless we are content to make the very modest claim of omniscience — venture to object against the doctrine of Special Providence that very good Christians are afflicted as much as other people. Rather let us accept the unqualified Divine and

rational assurance that, if we are Christians in deed, we shall always have plenty and prosperity, health and peace, safety and happiness; for, for all these things, God's pledge is our security; and let us have the courage and the honesty to confess when He chastens us, that it is for our sins; and no longer hold up our hands and cry, "Mysterious Providence!"



## XV.

### REWARD OF CONSECRATION IN TIME AND ETERNITY.

“ Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” — *MATT. xvi. 25.*

IT is in powerful illustration of the original depravity and actual corruption of human nature, that this grand utterance of Christ, which epitomizes, in a single sentence, the whole law of God and the whole philosophy of life, should be, in form and seeming, a paradox. The simple fact that it so strikes us, is in positive proof that, in our habits of living we are opposed to that law, and in our modes of thinking, strangers to that philosophy. And if this be true, how sad the reflection that our whole lives have been one vast mistake! Having built them on a false and unsubstantial foundation, it should no longer surprise us that they fall in ruins upon our heads. Then, too, all the mystery of Providence ceases; all the marvel of our great losses, trials, and afflictions vanishes; for we are wrong, and Heaven would set us right; and these are the discipline by which, in love, a Divine Father would open our blinded eyes to the true light, and attract our wandering feet to the true path. The propositions contained in the text seem to be essentially these: That whoever devotes his

life to self-aggrandizement, shall miss the end for which he strives ; and whoever, for Christ's sake, dedicates his life to the welfare of others, shall secure his own ; in other words, the great principles of selfishness and benevolence are here contrasted, in their effects upon human and individual welfare.

Let us test the soundness of these propositions by applying them, first, to the problem of temporal prosperity ; and this involves money, social position, health, and safety. With regard to money the question is whether selfish avarice or Christian generosity be the surer road to fortune ? and, on this point, let the testimony of God be heard first. He says, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." "The liberal soul shall be made fat." "Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given will He pay him again." These words of the Most High, uttered in the ear of the world during hundreds and thousands of years, have not been spoken quite in vain. They have won their way by slow degrees to the confidence of men. Most people believe them in part, and act correspondingly ; being more or less liberal, according to the measure of their faith in the profitableness of liberality, as a policy. Very few, however, can be found in the whole world, who are ready to take

these Divine utterances for the substantial verities which they really are, and base their worldly hopes upon them, as upon a rock of changeless and perpetual truth. Yet, if we could gather up, and adjust, and estimate fairly, the results of all our observation and experience, a vast preponderance of evidence would perhaps be found on the side of God's word. We have all noticed the different and contrasting effects, upon ourselves, of the liberal and avaricious types of character in others. The former we admired, loved, sought, aided, by all the means in our power. If such a man was in business, we dealt with him ; if in trouble, we were glad to lend him a helping hand. The opposite character, we disliked and shunned. We gave him no patronage, lent him no assistance. If he were in trouble, we thought, " let him help himself out of it. *He* would help no one ; he lived for himself ; let him fail and fall ; he deserves it." Now, in this respect if in no other, our hearts are the microcosm in which we may see the world in miniature. Other men think and feel, on these subjects, very much as we do ; and thus we evolve, from the simplest reasoning, the great practical truth that, as a mere matter of worldly policy, Christian liberality is the surest road to prosperity ; that the only money which can be effectually secured, is that which one gives away to a worthy charity ; that while everything else may be wrecked and lost, this is an investment which will yield him sure returns. We may not be able to trace the hidden path of those returns ; it leads through a

thousand vicissitudes of fortune, which only the eye of God can follow. The beggar, whom ten years ago we relieved and forgot, is to-day in independent circumstances; and *he* has not forgotten, but is waiting and watching for opportunities to return, in a thousand forms and ten thousand fold, that obligation whose existence we do not suspect. And so of many others; we cannot see and understand these processes; but God's own signet is on the bond which secures the pecuniary return of every real charity. It is not—it cannot be—lost. There is something in the grasp of avarice, too hard and close to retain, in the highest measure, anything so fine, fleeting, and subtile as pecuniary prosperity. I remember, when a boy, asking a liberal and wealthy gentleman—whose large charities were the talk of the neighborhood where he lived—how he could give away so much money, and still, as it seemed, be growing richer every day. We were standing together, when I asked the question, in one of his immense barns. He replied, “I will show you;” and stooping to a bin, filled his hand with some very fine grass seed. It lay upon his open palm in a little heap. “Look,” said he, “that is the open hand; you see how much it holds. Now look again!”—then closing his hand, which caused nearly all the seed to trickle through his fingers and escape—“that is the closed fist!” I have never forgotten that lesson; it was a revelation to me. It is true that a miser may accumulate much gold; but he misses the great end of his wealth, and is poorer than poverty in the midst of

plenty ; while, in reality, his paltry savings are as nothing in comparison with the princely affluence of the man whose charities are boundless as his life.

But temporal prosperity includes social position ; and this point needs no more than to be named, in order to convince every one that the advantage is altogether on the side of the generous man. There is perhaps no virtue which so surely and entirely wins all hearts. Even those who cannot emulate, will not fail to praise ; while the mean and avaricious citizen earns the scarce-concealed contempt of his very kindred and dependents, and becomes, to the multitude, a by-word for all that is base and groveling. So thoroughly, indeed, are men's convictions in harmony with Divine truth, on this point, that many utterly destitute of sympathy for a good object, will yet contribute liberally to it, for the sake of their standing and reputation in the community. And they might save themselves this trouble and spare their souls the sin of this hypocritical homage to virtue, for their policy deceives hardly anybody. The truth is, selfishness can put on no successful disguise. The fangs of the wolf are discerned, by all save a few silly ones, through the inevitable breaks in the fleecy covering. Such a man puts on the appearance of generosity, in order to secure for himself and his family a high social position. His object is not to deserve it, but to obtain it. And this vulgar aim for place becomes the darling ambition of his soul. This is his development of selfishness. Indeed, there is scarcely any sacrifice which he will

withhold from this idol. And all in vain ; for he can never compass his design. He may seem to rise, become wealthy, hold office ; he is merely the frog in the fable. No really discerning eye takes him for other than he is. As those new to fortune put on finery, gold, jewels, in order to ape their superiors, and strut and plume themselves, and vainly fancy they are admired, while they are simply contemned, — so the man who devotes his life to his own social advancement, though he may seem to succeed and win the suffrages of many as vulgar as himself, in fact fails always ; and is known, by those really high in social position, for what he is — a vain, conceited, and ambitious parvenu.

So, on the other hand, one taught in the school of Christ to prefer others before himself, and conforming his social life to this principle ; seeking never his own advancement, but aiding all others as he has opportunity ; striving to deserve all honor, but to win none ; aiming to *be* all that is pure, noble, and generous, and to *seem* nothing that he is not, may succeed in life ; rise to wealth, rank, and honor ; become his high place, and pass away amid the praises and regrets of men ; simply because he knew that “it is more blessed to give than to receive,” and built his life on this knowledge. We appeal again to consciousness. It is to such a man we readily concede the honor which he will never claim. We perceive, in his character, what seems to us an innate nobleness — but which, in reality, is an engrafted vir-

tue — which entitles him, in our esteem, to all the respect and influence which our suffrages can bestow ; and these we delight to heap upon him. Other men are but copies of ourselves, in this feeling ; and the result is, the words of Christ are sustained : “ Whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it.”

We come now to a point, in the application of these principles to the temporal prosperity of men, in which the discovery and manifestation of the truth may be more difficult : namely, health and safety ; or man’s physical well-being. How this may be affected, injuriously or beneficially, by his principles, is more difficult to show ; not because it is less true, but because the relations on which it depends are more subtle, and more easily elude the mental grasp of a weak or clumsy thinker. Such a man loses the thread of argument at every turn, and can never find it again ; or stops and stumbles at a thousand fancied inconsistencies, where a clearer eye and a surer foot would find the safest and smoothest path. He cannot see how a man’s religious principles can affect his health or safety. Is not health a mere matter of physical organism, governed by laws which have no relation to the spiritual world ? And is not safety in the hands of blind accident, or a law so utterly beyond our perception and influence that we term its results fortuities ? And yet this same man has been made ill by anger ; has been prostrated by despondency ; has been raised up and reanimated by hope ; and

now is startled by the proposition that his religious principles have anything to do with his health ! He has forgotten that there subsists, between God's organic law in man's physical system and his statutory code in revelation, a vital connection, as well as an essential harmony ; that he who transgresses the one, violates also, and always, and of consequence the other.

It only remains to resolve this whole matter into two plain questions ; to which, if we can obtain satisfactory answers, we shall be able to see the entire subject in a clear light, and reach conclusions which will become convictions. These questions are, first, Does there exist a close and intimate connection between man's mental states and his physical health ? To this question, all reason, experience, and science, give an unqualified and affirmative response. We need stop neither to argue nor illustrate. Then, in the second place, Is selfishness or benevolence, when operating as a controlling principle in the heart and life, more favorable to physical health ? Of this question Jesus Christ, in the text, assumes the affirmative ; and we follow in his sacred footsteps ; not blindly, though we might, even thus, safely follow *Him* ; but seeing, also, that the whole path is lighted by clear and unprejudiced reason. Selfishness antagonizes us with all the world. All men are our rivals, competitors, enemies ; because they seek to possess themselves of the objects which we desire to make our own. Envy, covetousness, impatience, fretfulness, resentment, anger, hatred, revenge,



make their home in the heart of the selfish man. Corroding and harrowing disappointments are the harvest of his life; a deadly and poisonous produce, which cannot fail to sap the vital powers, and render the man a physical wreck. On the other hand, benevolence is the Divine mode of love. All gentle, kindly, and generous emotions reside in that man's breast who is governed by this principle. These are his inspiration to all diligence, and his comfort and support under life's heaviest burdens. They strengthen his weary limbs, and refresh his exhausted powers. They diffuse the glow and energy of a spiritual life through all his physical system. They multiply, by many times, its capacity and force. If you remind me that selfishness has its quickening inspiration, as well, and point me to Alexander, Cæsar, and Bonaparte, as sublime examples, I reply, that the energies of selfish ambition are feebler to animate and stronger to destroy; and point you to Paul, and Luther, and Whitefield, and Wesley. Ay, to Wesley! the man to whose great loving soul, the weight of a thousand benevolent cares seemed no greater than, to his head, the weight of a thousand hairs! Ay, come with me to his death-bed, and see him with the burden of more than fourscore years upon his frame, calmly, in the sweet consciousness of a soul at peace with God, yield his spirit to the hands of his Maker! Hear him lift up his princely voice, in the jubilant tones of a younger manhood, and exclaim — while to the eyes of the weeping witnesses the waiting chariots of the skies seem almost

in open sight — hear him shout, with his last expiring breath, “The best of all is God is with us!” and thence go, if you can, to the Greek, dying from the effects of his debauch; to the Roman, stabbed in the senate chamber by his friend; to the chained Exile of Elba, feeding his fierce fancies on his own wild heart; and worship, instead of the God of Love, that demon of selfishness on whose altar were immolated these splendid lives.

Something of what we have just said, applies with quite as much force to safety as to health. Selfishness antagonizes, while benevolence conciliates, all surrounding influences. If security from violence depends at all upon the agency of other men — and all will admit that it does so depend very largely — then, by just so much at least, it must be conceded benevolence is superior to selfishness, as a ruling principle, with reference to that end. And in so far as safety depends upon accident and chance, are not these God’s own peculiar sphere and store? — held sternly in reserve from human calculation, for the avowed purpose of drawing thence, from time to time, such temporal sanctions of his spiritual laws, as may awaken remorse in the hardest and rouse fear in the boldest? And how, in all reason, should these resources, drawn from that realm of fortuity over which God immediately presides, be applied in the government of the world? Certainly, to bless the good: as certainly, to warn the wicked. And this principle arrays, on the side of the safety of the all-loving and purely consecrated Christian, all the chances

of his life ; and against the safety of the selfishly impenitent man, all the chances of *his* life. Estimate, if you can, this immense difference, and then add to it the natural effect of all the enmities which selfishness provokes and benevolence disarms ; and then say, if the grand total does not, even with reference to man's physical safety, justify the words of Christ : " Whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."

Thus far we have explained and enforced these words with especial reference to temporal prosperity, including property, social position, health, and safety. We have laid down (and we hope established) the doctrine that, even with reference to material good alone, — supposing this were the great and only end of man's being, — were he even destitute of an exalted spiritual nature and of an immortal destiny, — still, benevolence, as the ruling principle of his life, would be found superior to selfishness, because conducing more directly and effectively to build up his fortune, secure to him the respect and affection of others, and conserve his physical well-being.

Now, we desire you to consider the same great morally antagonistic principles of selfishness and benevolence, with reference to their effect on man as a spiritual being. And first, with regard to his intellectual nature : plainly, all his mental culture may spring from selfish or benevolent motives ; he may intend to accomplish by it either his own welfare or the welfare of others ; and the simple ques-

tion is, which one of these two motives will more dignify, ennoble, expand, quicken, and strengthen his intellectual powers? Whether of these two moral forces, as a motive power, will push the intellect to higher conquests?

We might pause here to remark that, *a priori*, the advantage must be on the side of benevolence, or a logical consequence little short of blasphemous will ensue; for, since it is conceded that man's intellectual advancement, other things being equal, is also man's exaltation and glory; and since God has recommended benevolence and condemned selfishness, — then, if benevolence be not the more powerful motive, it follows, by necessary sequence, that the divine Creator seeks by his law to degrade instead of elevate his human creatures.

But aside from this iron logic, which binds us to assent or blaspheme, we have elsewhere and everywhere the most gentle, persuasive, and yet powerful encouragements to accept the truth. The man — lawyer, physician, merchant, mechanic, or farmer — who adopts the hard rule of incessant and absorbing application to business, as the means, we will suppose, of professional eminence, — allowing, for the sake of argument, this to be the grand object of his selfish efforts, — has, on mere grounds of policy, it is easy to show, committed a capital error. The long, dead-level strain upon his faculties weakens their tension and impairs their capacity. It is as if a weight, equal to his utmost strength, were suspended upon his arm and never removed. The physical effect, in the one case, is

analogous to the mental in the other. A species of intellectual paralysis ensues. The mind dwarfs, dwindles, shrinks, decays. Being of finer texture and hardier qualities than the body, it will longer sustain the unnatural pressure; but the result, though more slowly reached, is the same. As, in the case supposed, the limb might for some time retain a muscular, sluggish, and insulated life after it had ceased to be useful in the wider functions of the animal economy; so the mind, wholly immersed in a secular profession, may continue to give evidences of a selfish and technical activity long after it is lost to society, to God, and to the great purpose of its own cultivation. But as there can be no doubt that the limb, if freed from the incessant pressure of its unnatural burden, and suffered to return to it only for occasional and stated intervals, while at other times it should be relaxed, resting, or engaged in a thousand varying toils and sports, would gain a finer and healthier development, and added strength for its especial task, — so there can be as little doubt that the mind, unchained from its professional oar, at regular and stated times dictated by Conscience and Duty, and suffered to disport itself in the sweet and chaste pleasures of society; to wander, at its own wanton will, in the flowery fields of literature; to kindle and replenish its wasted fires at the altars of God's house; and, above all, to try its strength in a thousand beneficent essays for the relief of human suffering and the rescue of degraded souls, — would not only reach a higher and grander development

under the power of these fine stimuli, but would return to its peculiar and secular vocation with a freshness, warmth, and glow which would render the heaviest burdens of business mere feather-weights to its agile strength, and increase by many fold its pure professional efficiency.

The selfish devotee of business is a mere intellectual automaton, strung on the wires of routine, and moved by the springs of habit ; and so he acts his mechanical part till the machinery of life wears out and falls to pieces, and there is an end of the silly show. Such a man is a lonely cipher in society while he lives ; it requires the significant numeral of beneficence to bring out his possible value, and render him a factor in the grand multiple of human good. Beyond the ranks of his professional brethren, and those attracted to him by their need of his professional services, he exerts no influence, wields no power. Other men neither know nor care whether he lives or dies. And there is no good reason why they should care ; for he never appears in society save under stress of circumstances ; and then he "talks shop" at his neighbor's dinner-table or his own ; not because it is vulgar, but because he has nothing else to talk. And this shriveled skeleton of intellect is all that remains of what might have been a princely mind ; and needed but the fires of benevolence glowing at the heart, to have quickened it to put on and wear forever all its regal honors ! So true are the words of Christ : " Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."

But a still sadder exhibition of the effects of selfishness may be seen in the domain of the passions. Here, in accordance with the obvious design of the Creator, all should be love, good-will, peace, joy, and bliss. In the family, the husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, should find their happiness in contributing to the comfort and convenience, peace and joy, each of all the others. The language of love should be the only tongue ever spoken; the tones of affection the only sounds ever heard. All gentleness, kindness, and tenderness should gather and abide as guardian spirits, around the hearth of home. The earthly home should be the nursery of heaven, and almost heavenly, in the celestial tempers of its inmates. Society should serve but to extend and keep aglow, and kindle to higher and purer power, the same gentle and kindly flame. The door of home should be opened only to let the love-light shine out upon the world. Its occupants should go forth burdened only with benisons, and return freighted with that pure joy revealed in the words of the holy Christ: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Hand should meet hand with the warm and cordial clasp of friendship, and both grow wealthier with every greeting. The stranger should be welcomed and prized as the future friend. Wherever soul touches soul, heart should embrace heart, and both be enriched by the kindly commerce. Art should be the magic dome where Affection sunned herself in beauty, and wore its glorious light forever. Science — wild steed of God,

roaming the pathless pastures of the universe — should be caught by gentle hands, and tamed and harnessed to the car of human progress, and draw the whole world heavenward. Government, regarding only the happiness of the governed, and pillared upon loving hearts, would be stable as the serene stars, and, like them, reflect the brightness of the supreme Light; and easy, henceforth, would lie the head that wore its crown. Nations would level the barriers between their peoples, and bind all shores together with electric cables, and bridge with their friendly commerce the pathless wastes of ocean, whose wild and stormy heart should itself own the magnetic influence of love, and gently bear to its destined haven every peaceful prow. Earth — Earth! would be “Paradise Regained.”

But “soft! we did but dream!” Look how the dark devil of Selfishness mars the fair scene! Domestic discord, wrangling, hatred, infidelity, divorce! Social estrangement, indifference, jealousy, envy, rivalry, revenge, murder! In business, covetousness, avarice, indirection, chicane, dishonesty, fraud, theft, robbery, extortion, and oppression! Art, the vile mistress of human pollution! Science — wild steed of God, caught by ungentle hands and but half-tamed — impatient, fretful, and maddened by his fiery master, hurling hundreds to destruction in a moment! Government, a synonym for oppression and wrong! Nation, “breathing out threatening and slaughter” against nation! The whole world dragged, by the mighty fiend of Selfishness, almost within the open jaws of



hell; and only held back, for a little while, by the pitying Grace of God! This is what we see. Alas, that men should have forgotten the wisdom of God! which teaches them that "he that will have friends, must show himself friendly." It is with the heart, as with everything else in this world: to give, is to increase; to withhold, is to shrink, shrivel, decay. But the narrow policy of selfishness so far prevails, and its maxims have won such social currency, that perhaps it may fairly be doubted whether, among all the thousands who make up the population of this city, there can be found many persons of either sex, who, in any high and disinterested sense, may be termed friends. Familiar acquaintances and social intimacies, there are a great many; but these are for politic and selfish purposes; and are but distantly, if at all, related to the more exalted and refined sentiment, of which they are at once the wretched substitute and the mocking travesty. And yet, true, tender, loyal, firm, and unwavering friendship—that cannot change, nor forget, nor grow cold, but waxes, like a golden chain, ever warmer and brighter under the attrition of years and troubles—is capable of kindling in the heart joys akin to those of heaven; and of constituting to the whole life a source of pure and powerful inspirations. All this is forever lost to the man who shuts his selfish sympathies at home, and is always afraid lest he should think more of others than they think of him. One who wore it long, and tested it thoroughly, said of that jealous suspicion,

which is but another name for selfishness, it "is a heavy armor, which, by its own weight, impedes more than it protects." Alas! the life, still more than the death, of this wretched man though great poet, attests the truth of his own words; a truth whose echoes are distinctly heard in the mournful cadences of the last song, which shook the chords of his wild harp, when, full of riches, honors, rank, he laid him down to die in the noontide of manhood, amid "those isles of Greece" of which he had sung so sweetly in his earlier years:—

"My days are in the yellow leaf;  
The flowers and fruits of love are gone:  
The worm, the canker, and the grief,  
Are mine alone."

Let the heart out in love, and its pulses will thrill the whole social world around you, and bring home to you jewels of affection, which will lend a sweeter and brighter radiance, even to the glorious light of the heavenly paradise; keep it in, and it will shrivel and harden to a fossil, to be picked up by any coarse and clumsy devil that crosses its track, and borne to the archives of hell; there to wake the wild mirth and rouse the ceaseless wonder of its fiendish denizens. So true again, even with reference to the commerce of the affections, are the words of Christ: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."

But the saddest of all the earthly effects of selfishness may be seen in the realm of the moral sense. Here, Conscience is corrupted and bribed,

and Veneration drugged and debased. Intolerance, exalted by its patron devil to a throne, erects the splendid temples of its Christianized superstition, and commands all men to worship at its altars on pain of temporal loss and everlasting death. The purest forms of Christian worship are become so murky with the foul hell-breath of bigotry, that honest men can hardly any longer look through them up to God. Sect is fighting against sect, and denomination making war on denomination; while here and there may be found an organization calling itself catholic and Christian by eminence, and yet claiming for its order a monopoly of the whole roadway to heaven. Intestine dissension, discord, division, are breaking the already numerous sects into still smaller and more contemptible fractions; while each, in its turn, puts on its armor of selfish exclusiveness, and lays its puny lance in rest against all the others. In single congregations even, parties divided on a thousand indifferent and non-essential issues, are arrayed against each other, and squabble and quarrel, and vie with the devil that inspires them, in the malignity of their mutual opposition. If we descend to individuals, the scene is still more disgraceful. Heaven's royal Champion — his "garments rolled in blood," in that dark contest with Death and hell from which He has just returned triumphant, and moving to the conquest of the universe — passes once through the streets of this world, and scatters largess to the wretched crowd who throng the footsteps of his purple steed:

not gold and gems, but crowns and thrones, and titles to everlasting bliss — enough for all earth's millions; and while the many scorn the bounty of a God, the few seize eagerly and hide, where none can see it, what they fancy is a sure title to heaven; forgetting — poor, silly, selfish souls — that the token of Christ's bounty is light, which "cannot be hid;" and that, when they come to die, and search in the soul's casket — where they think that they have placed it safely — for the imagined treasure, it will be found that nothing is there. It is something past all marvel, to behold and mark the wonders of this selfishness in matters of religion. A father has found, as he hopes and believes, the "pearl of price;" and he hides it away, where his daughter whom he loves, cannot see it, and be led by the sight to seek that other pearl which heaven's Lord let fall for her. The mother hides it, like a guilty secret, from her son! Husband from wife, and wife from husband! Hearts so tender and devoted, that they keep back from each other nothing else, make a secret of their religion! Wonder of wonders! They are ashamed to show it! True, it was not so, perchance, when they first found it: they so rejoiced — they were so glad and happy then — that its sweet and holy light shone all around them; and others looking on them said, "I too will seek the 'pearl of price.'" They had forgotten to be selfish, then! But soon the banished devil came again to their hearts, and found them "empty, swept, garnished," and unguarded by the angel of

Benevolence; and "taking seven other devils, worse than himself, he has entered in and dwelt there," unsuspected and unfeared; and he is there to-day! And the silly owner, who dreams that an angel keeps the place, will find himself, when he comes to die, in the clutches of the manifest and all-powerful fiend! So true, again, even in matters of religion, are the words of Christ that "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."

Hitherto, we have interpreted these words as setting in order, contrasting and comparing, the great moral principles of selfishness and benevolence, as motive powers, with reference to their effect on the whole question of human welfare. In the first place, we tried the soundness of the proposition that benevolence is the more powerful and profitable motive, with exclusive reference to the question of man's material and temporal welfare; and found the words of Christ sustained by history, reason, and experience. Again, we have regarded man as a spiritual being, and found the truth of the Saviour's words still more strongly evidenced. In conclusion, we desire to illustrate the effect of the same principles of selfishness and benevolence, considered as rules of life, on man as an immortal being.

The proposition which we now lay down is, in harmony with the text, a seeming paradox: that selfishness, as the governing motive of man's existence in this world, will lead to the eternal loss of

all that it seeks ; while benevolence will lead to the eternal gain of all that it fails to seek. We would make the soundness of this proposition plainly evident to all minds, by some simple and easy reflections, which may be level to the commonest understanding, while, at the same time, in point of simple correctness, they may challenge the criticism of the highest and most cultivated.

First, then, with regard to property : from the miser to the mean and close man of business, and from the avaricious business man to the most seemingly but politically generous of all in the ranks of trade ; each will meet with a pecuniary success, proportioned to the liberality of his principles. The miser will accumulate and gloat over his petty hoards ; the merely stingy, and by consequence somewhat broader-minded man, will succeed more largely ; while he of comparatively generous impulses and liberal policy, will distance both the others in the race of pecuniary acquisition. This is the law of temporal success, which bestows, with perfect discrimination, its rewards according to the infinitely varying merits of men : this is the great law of sequence, between seeking and finding. Each man's pure pecuniary success is proportioned to his freedom from the degrading vice of money-meanness. But there comes, after death, a final settlement of the accounts of life ; in which selfishness, in all its forms, loses whatever it seemed to have gained. The dying miser clings in vain to his golden god. The fleshly grasp may endure, even after death ; and stranger-hands may

find it hard work to unclasp the cold fingers and rob the dead; but the miser's spirit scorns even its own clay; and leaving the useless treasure in the ice-cold clutch, departs, at the bidding of its God, to the retributions of eternity. Respectable Avarice, who built his splendid home, and dwelt there in comfort and luxury, and forgot the beggar at his gates, must abandon all his selfish elegancies to the squabbles of greedy kindred, and join hands with Dives, in hell, to swell the chorus of the soul's poverty, in shrieks for one drop of that "water of life" which flowed at his feet unsought and untasted, in time. Even the politic and princely Affluence, who scattered his superfluities on every hand, to gratify his own vanity and enlarge his success, must not only leave his magnificent revenues to others, but will find himself bereft of the immortal profit even of his seeming charities; for the eye of Omniscience, looking deep into his selfish heart, will read all its secrets, and the Divine voice will say, "Thou didst it not for the sake of the poor, nor for My sake, but for thine own glory and good. Thou hast had all thy reward. Depart, to the deep and inexorable hell of the crafty, who simulated virtue on earth, and wore the livery of goodness to deceive!"

So, the men whose development of selfish craving takes the form commonly known as ambition; whose energies are devoted to a life-long struggle for power and place, will succeed in the darling object of their hopes in a proportion accurately exact to the enlargement and liberality of their

policy ; for this, we repeat, is the law of temporal success in all its departments. Some of them will win a mere local and petty elevation ; will be the little-great men of the country town, village, or neighborhood. Others will build on a broader foundation, and rise to provincial fame and influence. Still others will achieve national importance, and hold the helm or wear the crown of government. And a few will write their heroic names in characters so large and high that the farthest and dullest eye can read them. But again Death comes, and strips the little-great man of his petty importance, and sends him to serve in hell ; strips the larger great man of his rank and honors, and allots him to a dreary preëminence of pain ; strips the purple robe and golden crown from the tyrant, and consigns him to a gloomy, clankless, and eternal chain ; tears from the hero's brow the blood-besprinkled laurel, and condemns him to look up forever to the wrath-cloud firmament of hell, and receive on his naked and defenseless head, the sulphurous rain of Divine judgment.

So, too, as we demonstrated before, whatever of health and safety the selfish man may enjoy in this world, other things being equal, will be proportioned to his freedom from the corroding and dangerous dominion of selfish passions ; a soul intensely selfish frets itself to death in a few years, or makes an enemy, who destroys it in a day ; another, less selfish, wears out more years, and receives fewer and less deadly harms, while the comparatively liberal and philosophical mind ex-



erts a sanitary influence over the whole realm of temporal welfare. But still again Death comes, and condemns the whole physical man to immortal disease, pain, peril, torment, and torture; the sole difference which we are able to conceive in this regard between the mortal and immortal organisms being, that the latter must be indefinitely more susceptible to painful influences, and absolutely incapable of reaching the insensibility of death. Behold, then, as the first climax of selfishness, its devotee in hell! his treasure lost, his worldly honors shriveled by the torture-fires of the damned, and his immortal frame, itself an infernal harpsichord, over whose quivering strings forever wander the burning fingers of fiendish Pain, searching all its depths for new and wilder notes of anguish to heighten the discords of perdition! and then turn and listen with your heart to the words of Christ: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it:" and confess that you were warned in time.

But, perchance, there are spiritual treasures, which the selfish man may retain, and which may soften the lurid colors of this hard picture! Let us see. We have shown before that the selfish mind, entirely devoted to business, philosophy, art, science, or any other pursuit, becomes, in process of time, a mere technical machine. We have a thousand illustrations of this truth around us. The mere lawyer sinks deeper and deeper into his dusty tomes, and musty parchments, and legal

saws, and learned quibbles, until the sparks of life and of intellect seem to go out together, and nobody misses him save his professional brethren. The mere physician, whose whole soul is in his profession, thinks and talks and writes of nothing else, till some fine morning *he* is sick and cannot heal himself, and so dies and is forgotten. The mere man of business, who has no time for church, nor for society, nor for anything else but business, perishes miserably at last under the burden of his ledgers, — crushed to death by his own accounts ! The mind of the woman of fashion is poisoned by her gewgaws, and the deadly virus sends her to an early and dishonored grave ; and her husband does not feel that he is widowed ! her children do not realize that they have lost a mother ! But again, to all these, Death comes. And what shall the mere lawyer do in another world ? himself the condemned criminal, with no advocate, and his soul's cause in hell's interminable chancery, and his cobweb sophistries consumed by the fiery breath of present and unceasing agony ? What shall the mere doctor do in that grim world where Disease is crowned king forever, and whence all remedial agencies are banished ? where plants of healing virtue never bloom, and all whose minerals are on fire ? What shall the mere business expert — the pride though he may have been of a commercial community — do to lessen his pain and mortification, when he finds too late that his whole great life-account has been neglected and forgotten ? that it is full of deadly and irrepara-

ble errors? that the day of settlement is passed, and he is a bankrupt forever? Or how shall the woman of fashion hide in hell the thunder-scars of Divine wrath, which will wither her loveliness, and substitute the queenly beauty of her brow, by the frightful Gorgon of Terror?

But the heart! surely the heart has treasures which will endure? What treasures has the heart of the selfish man? If he had a friend on earth, it was because he hid from that friend's eye the master-devil of his bosom. If a woman ever dreamed that she loved him, it was her youthful fancy of which she was enamored, and which threw its golden glamour over his character. In eternity, when God's revealing eye shall lay bare his soul, what heart so poor that it will cling to him then? No red, consanguine tie will there subsist to attach even his own children to his side. Even the souls of his infant offspring will start back aghast from the manifest devil that glares through him. God's universe has not so poor a sentient creature, that he may win or purchase from it one caress to slake the fiery longing of his soul for love. With all that is foul and horrid to his sense, with all that is loathsome and hateful to his heart, he must lie down in an eternal embrace.

But the man has done good! Surely this shall abide, and yield him satisfaction even in hell? He has relieved human want and suffering! He has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, given feet to the lame, speech to the dumb, ears to the deaf,

and sight to the blind! He has educated the orphan, and made the widow's heart to sing for joy of his timely bounty! He has been a most efficient and useful member of beneficent associations! He has been complimented, honored, and praised for his liberality! He has generously supported the Gospel, Christ's own institution! He may even have prayed, and read the Bible, and put on all the outward forms of Christianity! Will all this avail him nothing, in the stern trial to which he goes? Alas! nothing; according to the words of Christ, "he has had his reward." He sought the praise of men, and he got it. He had no right to expect more. The very good which he did was poisoned by his selfish motives, and brought no blessing to his own heart. His life is one vast loss! Every material and spiritual accumulation is swept away, and he enters naked and empty into hell, to be clothed with the flaming wrath of God, and fed on eternal torments. Behold him there! every temporal good lost, or turned by the alchemy of hell to a fiery and immitigable curse! his gold melted by infernal fires, the lava flood that consumes him! his rank, the measure of his agony! his strength, the immortal resistance which gives power and poignancy to pain! his spiritual nature, a noble vessel, broken on the dark rocks of perdition, and sunk in "the lake of fire!" — behold him there! and then turn and listen, with your heart of hearts, to the warning words of Christ: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it."

Let us turn now to the consideration of the latter member of the proposition: Benevolence will lead to the eternal gain of all that it fails to seek. A man, we will suppose, for Christ's sake, or because he is in sympathy through the converting grace of God with the great ends of the Gospel, dedicates his life to goodness. Preacher or layman — it makes no difference — his object is the same. Man or woman — it makes no difference — their object is the same. Lawyer, physician, tradesman, mechanic, farmer, laborer, artist; it is all one — the great object of his life is to glorify God in doing good to other men. To this one purpose he consecrates all his powers and bends all his energies. If he will do this by his talent for accumulating money, it is all right; and the first effect will be a pecuniary success larger than he could possibly have achieved on any other plan of life. All the conditions of success meet and are satisfied in the character of such a man. Industry, Economy, Liberality — the guardian genii who preside over the hidden treasures of this world — are the slaves of that magic talisman of Benevolence which he carries ever in his bosom; and fast as they fill his hands, he empties them again into the lap of pallid and degraded Want. The wretched are relieved, the capable encouraged, and even the vile reclaimed, through his ever glowing and insatiate zeal for good. And so, a subordinate deity — a commissioned providence — he walks the highways of this world, scattering benisons on every hand, and followed by the prayers

and tears and blessings of all the needy. But of all which he thus scatters abroad, how much shall he find again in the life to come ?

In this life, another effect will be his social exaltation. He had not thought once of this ; but he finds, unexpectedly, that the suffrages of all hearts are his own. All the current of men's honors sets towards him. According to his capacity, he rises to a less or greater height of social eminence ; but in every instance, higher than he could possibly have climbed on any other scheme of life. Of humble abilities, *he* will be the little-great man of his city, town, or neighborhood. Of larger powers, his influence will sway added thousands. Of regal mind, he will ascend the throne of state, assume the purple, control armies, govern millions, influence nations, and so fill the souls of men that their latest descendants shall repeat his name. A poet, he shall write his epic on the ages, and the heavy footsteps of the far centuries shall not erase a single line. A follower of science, the curtains of the upper deep shall be withdrawn, and he will stamp his image on the stars of heaven, and men shall think on him as long as they look on them. A practical philanthropist, the massy cells of human misery shall keep the memory of his angel presence while their granite walls endure. But, of all this earthly exaltation and glory, how much shall he find again in the life to come ?

Another earthly effect of his benevolent temper, will be physical health, strength, and safety. This, as we have been at some pains to demon-

strate, depends always, other things being equal, upon the predominance of kindly feelings in the heart. These, it is true, cannot overcome constitutional maladies; but they can mitigate even their force, and will ameliorate their pangs. Neither can benevolence assure one against the effects of accident and violence; but, by disarming malice, and propitiating the Omnipotent Controller of all life's fortuities, they will increase by a great number the chances of physical security; and all these chances are, to this man, the angels of the special providence of God; and bring him, in every healthful throb of his pulse, and in every hour's security from physical evil, new tokens of his Heavenly Father's love. But of all this health and strength, of all the glad exuberance of physical life in its highest and most beautiful forms, what part will remain to him in the world of spirits?

But why linger — why dwell? why sound, again and again, the mournful refrain of Doubt, while the live Certainty springs wingèd and Heaven-sent to the heart, like dead Hope, raised from the grave of earthly disappointment, and clad in the glorious garments of fruition? Ay, he shall save all his earthly treasures. Not one shall be lost. Even the coarsest and most material shall lose nothing save the dross which marred its beauty and lessened its value. He has learned from the wisdom of Christ how to make to himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when he fails on earth, they may receive him to everlasting

habitations. His worldly honors will be exchanged for the suffrages of saints and angels, the praise of God, and a throne, and crown, and dominion immortal. His frail fleshly frame will give place to that pure vehicle of mind which must inherit all the physical joys and powers of heaven. His spiritual treasures are so solid and substantial that they will bear, without loss, transportation from mortal to immortal shores. Every power and possession of his intellect, having been consecrated to God on earth, shall find a new and grander sphere in heaven, where Facility and Efficiency shall go hand in hand to the conquest of infinite knowledge and the development of infinite strength. All his jewels of affection, having been intrusted to God's keeping on earth, he will find them again in heaven ; not rough and unpolished, as when he surrendered them here, but bright with the touch of infinite Skill, and set in the crown of the Eternal. Conscience and Veneration — twin guardians of his soul in this world, by whose holy light his feet were guided while his worshipping vision sought ever the Invisible — freed from the infirmities of earth and winged with celestial powers, will there conduct him perpetually to new and more glorious heights, and unveil to him more and more of the perfections of the Infinite and the Divine. Forgetful of self here, the precious and inalienable possessions of immortality shall heap his soul there. Thoughtful for others here, the tender hands of angel Gratitude shall minister to him forever there. Consecrated to God



here, he shall be possessed of God there. All, all that he gave out, of temporal or spiritual good on earth, he shall find, in infinite and inexpressible ratio, and keep forever in heaven ; while all that the selfish man gives or withholds, shall be lost in this world, and lost in the world to come ; for these are the changeless words of Christ : “ Whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.”

## XVI.

### CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS.

“Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”—2 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

To manifest God’s truth to man, is the grand business of the preacher. He is God’s advocate and pleader with the human heart. Technical theology may be a profession; preaching is not. It is a Divine office, for which he only is qualified who has the unction of the Holy Ghost. All mere professions contract and dwarf the man; preaching expands him to the utmost capacity of his nature. The preacher is *par eminence* among men the lover of humanity. The ruling passion of his soul is benevolence. His life has but one purpose—to do men good. The meditations of his calmest moments, the gathering and glow of his loftiest powers, and the agony of his spiritual wrestlings, all culminate in the practical question, “How shall I save and bless my kind?” While his people think of self, he thinks of them. While they scheme and plan for personal aggrandizement, in a narrow and temporal sphere, he schemes and plans for their larger development and higher

destiny. He studies for means of influence and pulses of power, that shall hallow and redeem them; that shall elevate, and deepen, and broaden, and consecrate their lives. He sees, in every congregation — he meets, in every pastoral walk — men who need but the inspiration of a pure and great purpose, to make them first-rate social powers. And now they are nothing. The community does not feel them; is not the better for their living in it. These he would awake, arouse, inform, and render his coadjutors in the redemption of the degraded masses. To accomplish all this, he has but a single means: by manifestation of the truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. By the corruption of the many, and the indifference and selfishness of the better few, we may estimate the greatness of his task, and form some conception of the courage and constancy required to enable him to enter upon such a work, and prosecute it to the end of life. He faints not, because, first, there is committed to him, Divinely, a dispensation of the Gospel, for which he will be held responsible in the day of judgment, and because, secondly, he has received mercy. None but the man who has escaped a peril, can properly appreciate its imminency. It was in this spirit that Paul termed himself "the chief of sinners," and avowed that he only received mercy because he acted ignorantly in unbelief. He saw not, otherwise, how God *could* have pardoned him. The preacher has received mercy, feels its magnitude, and trembles

lest others should not receive it. The memory of his own pardon melts his heart to sympathy with all the unpardoned of earth. Who feels for the wretch upon the scaffold, like one who has himself been there, and was snatched, by executive clemency, from the very jaws of death? Therefore, in discouragement, destitution, and darkness; in affliction, persecution, and death, the true preacher of the Gospel, forgetful alike of self and suffering, and stirred by the impulse of a boundless and quenchless sympathy, continues to address, to those who will not heed, exhortation, warning, and appeal, till his voice grows husky with the damps of death, and sounds as from afar, like the faint cries of one borne to a bitter doom. Such a man, when he appears to plead the cause of God and humanity, stands forth with clean hands and a pure heart. He has "renounced the hidden things of shame;" bidden them an eternal farewell. He is divorced from Sin, and loathes her very memory. No secret guilt corrodes his bosom, and turns his public sacrifice into profanation and hypocrisy. He cannot walk in craftiness, nor handle the Word of God deceitfully. He dares not preach falsely, for doctrines, the commandments of men. No power can awe, no wealth can buy, no pleasure allure his testimony from the truth. Only by manifestation of the truth, will he commend himself to every man's conscience.

Nor will he preach *himself*. Worldly ambition—the ambition to rise, to shine, to attract and dazzle crowds, that he may win a name and

reputation as a popular preacher — has no place in his heart. Not for the world, in immortal fee, would he incur the guilt of decking with the flowers of his oratory, and lighting with the glow of his eloquence the passage of the human myriads down to hell. The voice of popular applause has no melody for his ear. He would rather hear the publican's cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He does not wish to hear it said that he has preached a fine or great sermon; or that he is able to do this; or that he is the greatest preacher of his town, or city, or neighborhood. But he does wish to hear it said that, under the influence of his preaching, men repent, sinners are converted from the error of their way, the Church is built up, and God's great name glorified. No sect — no array of sectarian advantages or Church preferments — can buy this man. He is not for sale. And he belongs to none. He is the property of no denomination. His soul is catholic with the kiss of God, and scorns a meaner caress. With that religious people whose doctrines and usages most nearly accord with his own convictions of truth and propriety, will he fix his spiritual home; and there, sharing the winter of their adversity as calmly as the summer of their prosperity, will he live and die, by manifestation of the truth, commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Is there question of the peculiar truth which the preacher should manifest? The response is broad as the universe: it is literally all truth.

Nothing can come amiss to him, in his high vocation. He, of all men, may safely "intermeddle with all knowledge." All history, science, art, literature, philosophy; the economy of material and practical life; the mysteries of trade; the theory of all governments and all professions, may swell the volume and increase the power of his grand and comprehensive common sense. He cannot know too much. He cannot manifest too much truth. All truth, like all Scripture, is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for illustration, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." But, while he may and should acquire and use all knowledge, in furtherance of his ministry — caring nothing for the reproofs of narrow and bigoted men who, not able themselves, on account of ignorance and mental barrenness, to invest the Truth with power and beauty and bring her crowned and sceptred into the presence of the multitude, that they may fall down and worship her, would therefore abase all presentations of the Gospel to their own dry, technical, and uninteresting standard — still, the first great object of his life and labors must be, the manifestation of the principles of the Divine government, as they are revealed in the Plan of Salvation. These principles, albeit they touch, in their relations, all men, all spirits, and all things, are yet essentially but two: Divine goodness and Divine justice. But the goodness is higher than heaven; the justice deeper than hell. And from those far heights and infinite

depths, as from all the universe between, must the daring and adventurous soul of the preacher bring proofs that Divine goodness is expressed in mercy and salvation to man, and Divine justice finds voice in the condemnation and punishment of man; and that both are vindicated, beyond question or cavil, by the immutable law of right.

Nor must he fear or shun to scrutinize, with all kindly severity, the conduct of men. But, as the insight cannot be too sharp, — since men's actions must pass a sterner test, — so the temper cannot be too tender and loving; for the voice of harsh and indiscriminate censure cures no faults. While, therefore, the preacher must not fail to see and expose, with vigilant eye and unsparing hand, the inconsistencies and sins of professors of religion and the crimes and vices of the world, he should deal with both in a spirit of a gentle and sorrowful kindness, rather than in that of indignant and unsympathizing reprehension.

But especially, he must come to men with light for all the dark and intricate problems of practical religious life. And to do this, he must have light in himself. He must himself have suffered and struggled with the dark fiends of despondency; he must himself have doubted and asked wild questions at the universe; he must have held his own soul in the torturing fires of intense thought, patient of anguish, and defying madness, until, from forth the imminent Death, leaped to his rescue the live Safety.

There is an account, in Croley's "Salathiel," of

a company of men, imprisoned in a subterranean chamber of one of Herod's palaces, in the centre of which stood a vast, frowning, and inscrutable image. Suddenly, a bright and intense flame leaped up around this object, and grew every moment hotter and fiercer, so that they were compelled to retire to the farthest verge of the apartment. And now they made the appalling discovery that the floor, the walls, the ceiling, were all metallic; and that the central fire was rapidly heating everything around them, to a degree which they might not long endure and live. A speedy and miserable death seemed inevitable to all; when one, with the mad courage of despair, ran and leaped into the central flame! There was a moment's shuddering cry — then silence; and out of the silence a voice — the voice of their rash comrade, shouting, "Here is safety — life! follow me!" and all obeyed, and were saved. The world is that apartment. Men are the sad company who cannot get out of it. The great, dim image of moral and spiritual Mystery stands in the midst of it. A flame of fierce destruction rages around it, and sends its lurid influence to the farthest wall; so that death is imminent everywhere; but one man bounds from the throng, dares the fiery doom, and finds light and life immortal where he only looked for death, and shouts to the perishing, "Lo here is safety! peace! rest! come here!" That man is the true preacher. Life shall furnish forth no dark Mystery; hung with the insignia of superstition, and devil-guarded



with fire, through which his daring soul will not pierce, that he may speak words of comfort and hope to them that are ready to perish. Of Divine omniscience and human freedom; of the dark ways of Providence; of life and death; of heaven and hell,—he shall give you a reason for the faith that is in him, that will pour a flood of cheerful light upon the gloomy difficulties of every candid and able thinker. Deep down into the nether darkness will he plunge, and patiently search for Truth among the charred and blackened heaps of the infernal; through the smoke and fumes of the pit; on to the central regions of the lost; where broods the spirit of final desolation; where dwell the forms that wear the scars of conflict with the Eternal: there, if she sit weeping and widowed of Joy, will he find, embrace, and bring her home to abide with him forever. High up into the intolerable light of glory will he climb, and search for Truth among the diamond hills of the supernal; through the flash and gorgeousness of the celestial city; on to the throne of the Supreme; where reigns the spirit of everlasting joy; where dwell the eldest-born of heaven: there, if she sit throned and crowned, and wedded to Rapture, will he find, embrace, and bring her to his soul's house, to comfort and abide forever with her sad, weeping sister. Far out on the verge of the infinite will he stand, and holding on by the Cross, lean over the abyss in search of Truth; and catching but a glimpse of her glorious garments, he will grasp and draw her to him-

self, and embrace and hide her in his heart ; and there, with her sisters twain, the sad and the happy Truth, the infinite Truth shall dwell forever, a holy and blessed trinity. And this is that truth, by manifestation of which the preacher commends himself to every man's conscience.

For the manner of this manifestation of truth, it must be, first, by lucid exposition. No mere array of words, figures, and texts will suffice. The preacher who has some distinct truth to impart must, in the first place, know what it is himself. He must see it clearly, in all its relations. His mind must interpenetrate its essential nature. This he must make plain to others. As he advances in exposition, he must leave nothing obscure, and abandon nothing as inexplicable. The highest reason in his audience must be satisfied. And having first made plain the theory of the truth, he must state, with unshrinking boldness, its practical application. Let it hurt or condemn whomsoever it will, though it be his best friend and most ardent supporter, he must fairly and distinctly say so : so distinctly that misapprehension is impossible. This boldness may startle some ; may cost him the esteem and friendship of others ; but if he be a true preacher, these things will weigh with him just nothing : he will pass right on to his great object. And finally, gathering up the forces of the truth, as a chieftain in a hard-fought field, resolved on victory or death, collects the shattered squadrons of his army, he hurls them in one resistless and overwhelming

charge, upon the hearts and consciences of his hearers. Thus he commends himself to every man's conscience.

This self-commendation of the preacher to the consciences of his hearers, by the manifestation of the truth, is a simple and uniform effect, in consequence of the natural relation between truth and conscience. They are near akin. Truth is God's utterance ; and Conscience, uncorrupted, is God's angel watcher in man's soul. Corrupted, she stands there, it is true, as the Devil's sentinel fiend. But in either case she hears and acknowledges Truth ; because Truth is God's voice, at which even the devils tremble. Conscience, hearing it, rejoices or fears, according as she is pure or corrupt. But even in the worst hearts, she is not so far fallen — she never can so far fall — as not to recognize and feel the truth, when she hears it, even if she be not free to consent to it. For sometimes, when the banner of Truth is descried approaching that frowning citadel of sin — the depraved and wicked heart of man — and Conscience begins to tremble and cry out, she is gagged and bound by the master fiend, lest her cries and struggles should betray the weakness of the place. To comfort and encourage him, then, the preacher may feel sure that he has this strong ally in every hostile soul. Conscience is of his party. She accepts and acknowledges, at once, the matter of all presented truth ; its fact, its reason, and its right. Besides, her first and strongest nature is always in sympathy with the

spirit of the true preacher. She feels his sincerity, throbs and burns responsive to his earnestness, and trembles at his power. Thus he commends himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

“*In the sight of God.*” This is the saddest, sweetest, strongest, and most solemn thought in in the whole text. How it broadens the theatre of the preacher's labors. It is no longer a narrow house, a diminutive pulpit and a handful of auditors. The ceiling is removed, and the walls are leveled, at the coming of the Mighty One. In the grand hush of the soul's silence, lo, He comes! and in his train are Life, Death, Time, Eternity, and all the Infinite! It is no longer a question of you and me. God judges between us, even in this primary court of Conscience, and makes up the record upon which we shall pass to the final awards of the Great Assize. Is my soul pure? Is your heart penitent? This is what He is about to write down upon the eternal tablets. Haste with your answer! Take the gag from the mouth of Conscience, and let her speak; and remember that God reads it, or ere her bruised and bleeding lips can syllable the sad response. Thus, by manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

## XVII.

### EPHEMERAL AND ETERNAL LIFE.

“The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” — 1 JOHN ii. 17.

LIFE is truly a mystery. All at once, and without any previous warning to consciousness, a being, both mortal and immortal, finds himself in existence, and an actor on the earth. “Where am I? whence came I? and whither am I bound?” are the questions which spring unbidden to the spirit’s lip. It were unreasonable, it were cruel, on the part of the Almighty to leave his sentient and immortal creature without an answer to inquiries so natural, so irrepressible, as these. Accordingly Revelation, in one form or another, makes answer to man that he is in time and on trial for eternity; that he came from the hand of the All-Creator; and that he is destined to judgment, and everlasting happiness or misery. But a new question arises: “What shall I do here? to what end devote myself, my powers? how influence my own final and irreversible destiny? How shall I distinguish the false from the true, the seeming from the real? What is not, and what is, a proper object of human devotion?” Again the Word of God responds, in tones weighty and solemn beyond ex-

pression, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

The world will not do to trust. The world must not win thy heart, nor engage thy powers; for the world passeth away. Even the seeming firm foundations of the earth shall be removed. Behold! the Almighty has hung it upon nothing, and itself is as unsubstantial as its trust. Its breast is full of hollow and deceitful fires. All that it contains of durable or beautiful must perish. Have thou no confidence in its hard iron, in its enduring brass; for these shall melt with fervent heat. Be not dazzled by its silver and gold; for they shall be consumed. Look not upon its precious stones; for these shall be as coal in the furnace of the final fires. Earth's caverned treasures perish. They are unworthy of thy pursuit. They will deceive thy trust.

Nor dwell upon the brave, bright pomp she wears upon her gaudy breast. Her fields are not evergreen. Time's frost even withers them. And there shall come another, the hoar-frost of the ages, the sure precursor of earth's last winter; and all shall feel its blighting power. No more, thereafter, shall her gaunt and hungry sons search in her barren bosom for their daily bread. No more shall the treasures of her forests bear, over ocean's wave, the rich products of the nations. No more shall her millions of busy looms be filled with stuffs of a thousand dyes to clothe and adorn her children. Barren as her rocks, she shall be cursed

with universal dearth, and her guilty sons doomed to everlasting famine. Then seek not what earth can give. "Labor not for the meat which perisheth."

Nor deem that the busy tribes of flesh and blood, which walk upon her breast and revel in her air, and disport themselves in her wide waste of waters, shall outlast the flowers that bloom and wither in a day. "All flesh is as grass; and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." All must perish; all are doomed. The seventh angel shall outpour his vial on the earth. There shall be lightnings, and thunderings, and fearful voices, and men's hearts failing them for fear. The burning wrath of outraged Heaven shall set on fire the sea, and its inhabitants shall perish; shall set on fire the air, and the winged dwellers in the blue ethereal vault shall die; shall set on fire the earth, and rouse the lion from his lair, and startle the tiger from his jungle, and the deer from his leafy couch: and these and all, with lordly man, their monarch, all, all shall be consumed. The corpse of Earth shall be wrapped in a winding-sheet of fire, and confined in the smoke of her own burning; and buried in deep destruction's gloomy vault; while the stars, bright mourners, shall look sadly on, and weep at the funeral of a sister world. Then seek not the world, for it "passeth away."

Nor deem that the lust of the world, the desire of its temporal good, because its home is in immortal bosoms, shall outlast its objects. The lust

of the flesh is the mere accident of earth, and has no place even in hell. Woman, condemned, banished from purity and good, shorn of her beauty and bloom, with the curse of the Eternal upon her blackened brow, with the fire of the furies shining in her eye, with the foam of eternal madness on her lip, and withering under the power of an immortal death, will awake no passion. Wine and strong drink, destitute of their peculiar power to elevate and to intoxicate, with the sparkle of strength and richness exchanged for the bubble of fiery and intolerable heat, and presented in the poisoned and burning chalices of the lost, could arouse no appetite. Delicate and costly viands, could they be prepared by fiendish hands at infernal fires, and presented reeking with sulphurous fumes, would have little power to tempt the palate. And even Indolence himself, spreading his couch on the red-hot pavements of eternal fire, would not long repose.

Nor shall the lust of the eye survive the common wreck. Having for her only covering the cloud of Divine wrath, and for her only mirror the lake of fire, even Vanity herself will hardly make a tedious toilet. Seated in the pall-hung hearse of everlasting night, bending over the hideous coffin of all hope, for a funeral march to an immortal grave, she will care little for the outward splendor of her trappings. Housed in the gloomy mansion of eternal wretchedness, with hideous sights and sounds forever near, she cannot dwell, with much of satisfaction, upon the amplitude and magnificence of her home.



And how shall the pride of life find room or play amid the helpless and hopeless ruin of all life? What will titled honors avail, under the eternal tyranny of the black prince Diabolus? Who will covet a high place in hell? where elevation will only serve to reveal to him more sights of suffering, and unveil more of the ghastly horrors of his dreadful home? Who will wish for fame? that he may be a lion in hell, and afford a spectacle for gaping fiends? None — none. All will perish; earth, and the passions which belong to earth. “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof;” therefore, seek not the world; trust not the world; turn from the world, and turn to God. Behold! I show you an object worthy of your heart: “He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

The will of God is, that man live to glorify his Maker. He who builds his life on this scheme shall know no failure. He “shall abide forever.” He shall be immortal in his labors. Even those which have, for their apparent ends, pecuniary objects, shall not die. He shall make to himself friends even of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when he fails on earth, they may stand ready to receive him into everlasting habitations. The fires which burn upon the hearths of many poor shall be kindled by his gold. The plenty on their tables, and the garments of comfort which they wear, shall be the purchase of his generous bounty. And those fires shall kindle a glow of undying gratitude in the hearts of the poor; and the strength born of that nourishment shall never

fail ; and the memory of those garments of comfort shall enrobe the spirit in vesture that never waxes old ; and all shall abide to the judgment of the last Great Day. The money bestowed to develop youthful promise into intellectual and moral manhood shall never perish. The means which constitutes the sinews of every benevolent enterprise is not lost. The wealth which has been converted into Bibles, and Testaments, and tracts, and wafted, by the breath of prayer, to far-off heathen homes, is immortal. The alchemists, in their wild midnight studies, sought a secret not half so precious or powerful as this. The good man has a gem which outshines the philosopher's stone. It will not transmute the baser metals into gold ; but it will change base, perishable gold into the immortal currency of the skies.

He who does the will of God shall abide in his labors for the social amelioration of the condition of his kind. He who has taken the drunkard by the hand, and, by his hopeful and kindly words, inspired him with confidence that he might become a man again ; he who has met the gambler on the threshold of his earthly type and almost sure precursor of an everlasting hell, and, with a brave, honest appeal for wife and children, turned his feet to home and virtue ; he who has encountered poor, modest, and desponding Worth, and with high words of hope and courage, won him to look up and struggle for the realization of a better destiny ; he who has flung his heart, and hand, and soul, and purse into the beneficent enterprises of

his age ; who has held high the banner of social progress ; and whose cheery battle-cry of " God and Truth ! " has fired the lukewarm, and roused the disheartened, and sent dismay into the ranks of error ; he whose patriotic purity has shamed the political corruptions of his times ; he who has thought, and felt, and prayed, and labored for the world's good ; whose broad sympathies have embraced the race, and stirred the sluggish blood in the veins of nations : can *his* labors die ? shall his words be forgotten ? No. The ever rolling surf of ages cannot obliterate the foot-prints *he* leaves upon the shores of time. He may be humble — the world may not call him great ; but he has made his mark upon those tablets which never give up a trace.

He that does the will of God shall abide in his religious labors. His prayers at the family altar have a double record : one in heaven, on the book of God's remembrance ; and one on earth, on the hearts of the inmates of his home ; and neither shall ever pass away. The lessons of religious truth, which he there inculcates, shall find a lasting lodgment in the susceptible breast of Childhood. His children may be led into vicious courses ; they may appear to scorn his teachings, and trample his prayers under their feet. It is only for a time. The good seed, sown by a parent's hand, cannot be easily rooted out of their hearts. His prayers, his tears, his holy life, can never be forgotten. His labors for the Church shall be equally fruitful and enduring. Not in vain (though it may seem so at

the time) does he faithfully fill his place, and do his work in the house of God. His regular labors in the Sunday-school may seem ineffectual; but they are not. His constant presence in the prayer-room, may not appear productive of much present good; but it will not be found so at the last. The words of warning or encouragement, which he addresses to his brethren, may fall on ears apparently listless; but yet, they reach the heart. Memory takes them up; and conscience repeats them; and the Holy Spirit reiterates them; and when forgotten by the speaker, they are telling on the life of the hearer. Besides, nothing is ever finally forgotten; and every word which the good man utters in his brother's ear on earth, shall be proclaimed from the house-tops, on the judgment morn. Then, all his patient labors shall be remembered; and their effect shall appear; and their reward shall be given him. The good man's works live after he is dead. When you buried the sainted ones who went out from among you in the years gone by, and came sadly from their graves to your homes, came they not with you? Did their memory perish? Has the odor of their piety even yet passed away? Let us, then, so labor for God and the Church, that when we die, we may leave in the world an element of religious power which shall go on accumulating to the end of time.

He who does the will of God, shall abide forever in his affections. These fair, frail flowers, which share always the destiny of their objects, he hangs around the enduring and imperishable.

Even in his sympathies for his kind at large, this extraordinary providence — this wonderful foresight — appears. It would seem as if he were gifted with Divine wisdom so to fix his affections that none may be lost, or fail to bring him a profitable return. He falls in love, not with the infirmities, but with the excellences of humanity. The welfare of the race is the object of his passion. He would not see them suffering, groveling, polluted, and dying. And are his earnest desires for their relief doomed to disappointment? Shall he not yet look with glad eyes, upon redeemed, regenerated, and glorified humanity? Shall he not witness their translation to a clime uncursed of sin? Shall he not see “the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness?” Shall he not see them gifted with physical perfection and affluent intellect, and rich and happy and immortal? And shall he not rejoice in all this?

The good man shall abide forever in the bands which link him to his friends. These are attached, not to their perishable persons and fading features, but to their undying spirits. The complexion of the soul, the stature of the intellect, the symmetry of the heart, the graces of devotion, — these are the beauties which awake his admiration, and secure his affection. The majesty of mind, the royalty of heart, the sovereignty of soul! here is the triune social deity, to which the good man pays rightful homage: no dumb and perishable idol; but immortal qualities, eloquent of truth and good. Ay,

these shall live and last. Freed from infirmity, unbound, unclogged, the wing of Intellect shall sweep the heaven of heavens. The flowers of tenderness and love, with all their olden beauty heightened by the hues of Paradise, shall bloom unfading, in the gardens of the skies. The fires of devotion, freed from the damps of earth and sense and sin, and fed by immortal hands, shall lick the throne of the Eternal. And shall he whose affections are fast bound to such qualities love in vain? Thank God, the good man's affections cannot die. Bound to the good and true, bound to the high and holy, fast bound to the Infinite and Eternal, while goodness, truth, and eternity endure, they shall never be unclasped.

He who does the will of God on earth, shall abide forever in his person. The image suggested by this language is of one standing firmly, as on a rock, with high port and firm eye, while storm and tempest and billow dash over him in vain. And some such shocks are destined to try the footing of every Christian. Let them come. He fears them not. With his feet planted on the Rock of Ages, and his arm around that Cross which hallows the heart it presses, nought shall shake him from his steadfast hold. Let the winds of misfortune blow, as blow they will, on the happiest sons of men: he will abide their fury. They may dash from his lip the cup of anticipated joy; but he knows that the vessel is caught by unseen hands, and that, brimming with the nectar of the skies, it shall yet be given him again. They may

sweep away the purchase of a life of toil ; they may dash his treasures into the deep ; but not one regretful glance shall follow them ; for faith assures him of a richer treasure, which they cannot reach. Laden with disease and pain, they may still blow on. They may chill his blood ; they may harrow up his soul ; they may cover him with loathsomeness and convulse him with agony ; but still, high above the wild confusion of the storm, and the dismal voices of his own irrepressible anguish, shall swell that pæan of the unblenched spirit, " Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Wilder and madder still they may blow. The storm of misfortune may deepen to the tempest of persecution. The hot simoom of slander, burdened with poison and death, may blacken his garments. What matter ? He wears an inner robe of righteousness, whiter than the light. Fierce and deadly gusts of opposition may come. They are powerless to do him harm. His life and possessions are insured, for more than their value, in a company whose solvency the last fires cannot shake. Deadlier still let the tempest fall ; full of fire-brands, arrows, and death ! Surely, he is overwhelmed ! Surely, he has perished under the terrible charge ! Wait till the din of the conflict ceases, and its smoke passes away, and I will show you a sight : There he stands ! There ! the same man still ; with his feet upon the Rock, and his arm around the Cross, and his eye uplifted towards the ineffable Glory ; and lighted with the fires of love and faith and hope and joy.

But now comes the last shock : the storms are done, and the billows rise. The chill waves of death are fast rising, and even now they break at his feet. Surely, this is too much ! No. Wait and see. Higher, and yet higher, rises the black and angry flood. See ! it grapples with a fair-haired child that clings to his knee ! His child ! She looks up, in mute appeal : “ O ! father, save me ! ” she would say ; but cannot speak. A moment, and the waves go over her, and she is swept out into the bleak Unknown. There is a look of anguish on the father’s face ; but it passes, and a smile of strange confidence and meaning takes its place. Higher, and yet higher, rise the waves ! There is one leaning on his arm. She has long leaned there. That arm has been her stay for many weary years ; but it cannot support her now ; and she does not think it can. She turns her face to his, and with a smile of unearthly sweetness and beauty, sinks down under the dark wave. Higher, and still higher, rise the waters. They are on his breast. They chill his heart. Their foam is on his lip, Still his eye does not blench — his cheek does not pale. Gathering up his soul, he hurls it into the one word, “ Glory ! ” and yields to death. The waves are gone over him — he is hidden from our sight. “ But,” you say, “ he did not abide that last test. He was conquered by Death.” Wait a little ; till the storm passes away, and the waves subside. Now look again. The Rock has risen, or the waves have fallen. We see no trace of those dark waters now : only the



Rock. And behold! it is broader than earth; and it is covered with the richest verdure; and flowers of every hue bespangle the green; and a wonderful tree full of strange and beautiful fruits casts a pleasant shadow over all. And there is a crystal stream—brighter than molten diamonds is its wave. And there are beings with shining wings, and everlasting brightness on their brows. And look! there is the same sweet child, and the same fond, fearless woman, and the same brave, strong man whom we saw, a little while ago, on the cold, barren rock, amid the choking waves of death. The same! the very same! but O! how altered now! The look of pain and fear is gone from the face of the little one; and she smiles such smiles as angels only see. There is no more pallor on the mother's brow—no more weakness in her frame. She seems the impersonation of immortal youth and beauty. And the man—the husband, father! He seems more changed than either—more wonderfully glorified. But with it all, there is the same high look of boundless confidence which he wore, when, on the Rock, he encountered misfortune and persecution and death. He looks as if he might abide forever. This must be heaven. It is; and here “he that doeth the will of God, shall abide forever.”

## XVIII.

### GOD'S GOODNESS AND MAN'S UNGRATEFULNESS.

“Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.” — Isa. lv. 6.

PERSONAL effort on the part of every man is, by Divine appointment, rendered essential to his salvation. And yet we are accustomed to say that Christ died to save men — all men. Why then are not all men infallibly saved? They are, in so far as their salvation was unconditionally involved in the death of Christ. But their complete salvation was not unconditionally accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ. What then is the precise extent to which all men are benefited by the Atonement? Precisely to the extent, in all essential things, to which they were injured by the fall of Adam. We receive in consequence of the sin of our first parents — not by imputation but by transmission — a moral taint, a complexion of evil, which disposes every man to sin; and which, but for the Saviour's interposition, would irresistibly dispose every man to sin. But this interposition of Christ confers upon every individual of the race, independently of his own choice and agency, a Divine influence which elevates him from a state of helpless depravity into a moral

agent, capable of good or evil, according to his own free, unfettered choice. He thus stands, by virtue of the Atonement, with reference to the Divine law, essentially where the first man stood; able, with the help which is freely and fully guaranteed to him, to keep it; and equally free, if he prefer to risk the consequences, to break it. For his future destiny, it depends absolutely upon himself. God is not, and cannot be, responsible for it. He furnishes man all needful information with reference to his past history, present condition, and future destiny; tells him of his fall, indicates those consequences which are personal to himself, points to the relief which has been kindly furnished by the interposition of Another, and shows him a "new and living Way," by which he is free and able to ascend far beyond the height from which he fell. In the name of conscience and reason, ought God to be expected to do more? If, after all this, man would rather grovel than soar — rather wallow in pollution than ascend to purity — rather sink to hell than climb to heaven — ought he not to have the privilege of pleasing himself?

God has given man the earth for his temporal portion; has furnished him with the germ of fruit and root and grain; has adapted the soil to the seed, and become responsible for the genial influences of climate; has instructed him in the art, and furnished him with the means of successful cultivation. What more would he have? Would he hope to obtain both seed and fruit without exertion of his own? Would he expect a Divine

Hand to plant, and cultivate, and harvest, and bring to his garner, and prepare for his table, and adapt to his palate, and actually put into his mouth, whatever was necessary for his health and his pleasure? And if, expecting and desiring all this, he should refuse to make any effort to satisfy his hunger, and finally die of starvation, would he not richly merit his wretched doom?

The water which quenches our thirst and purifies our persons and makes life so sweet and beautiful, flows deeply under earth. Should we complain because God has not caused it to flow everywhere upon the surface, and into our chambers, and over our persons? Should we cease therefore, to dig for the fountain, to bathe and to drink? Should we die?

Should we complain because cotton and linen do not grow in every man's house, ready spun and woven, and dyed and printed, and made into garments adapted to his comfort, convenience, and style of living, and changing with his fashions? — because cloth-mills do not spring up at every man's hand, and the looms of Cashmere do not shred their gorgeous fabrics in every lady's chamber?

Because the materials of our dwellings must be gathered from the forest, the kiln, the quarry, and pass through laborious and expensive processes; because fine houses do not spring up in a night at our bidding, like the magic palace of the Arabian prince, should we therefore refuse to shelter ourselves from the cold and heat and become squalid

savages, or die from voluntary and evitable exposure? Because towns and cities and ships of war and commerce do not construct themselves to our hand, should we therefore forego all corporate association, and cease all intercourse with distant peoples?

Because all medicines, needful for the preservation or restoration of health, are not ready exhumed, distilled, analyzed, mixed, prepared, prescribed, and administered, without trouble, expense, or nausea, should we therefore cease all efforts to contend with disease, and yield ourselves the helpless and passive victims of infection and contagion and fever?

Because learning is not intuition, and the wisdom of all the wise and the deep science of the universe may not all be comprehended in one mental glance, should we therefore refuse any longer to study and to know?

And the Bread of Life, broken for us on Calvary! shall we not *go* to possess it? shall we not *labor* for it? must God *force* it upon us? And the "Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness!" is it too much trouble to seek its healing waters? And the robe of righteousness — the "wedding garment" of salvation! shall we refuse it because it must be made up by our own hands with "fear and trembling?" And because as builders, we must labor in the spiritual temple of the Lord, shall we prefer to be shut out from its glorious walls forever? And because our sin-sick souls can only be healed by a personal application to the

Great Physician, shall we suffer the deadly leprosy of evil to consume us? Because the knowledge of God must be diligently sought, shall we abide in eternal ignorance? Will we be such fools? Then let eternal hunger and thirst and nakedness be our portion; let us find no shelter from the storm of God's wrath; let us sicken and die of sin, and dwell forever in the foul darkness of perdition; for richly do we deserve our doom.

But personal effort, timely and faithfully made, will infallibly secure the full salvation of every man who makes it. There is a time, in the history of every human agent when, if he seek God faithfully, he may find Him; when, if he call upon Him fervently, "He is near," and will hear the call. No difference who seeks or calls, in accordance with these conditions of time and faithfulness. "God is no respecter of persons." He will hear one man as soon as another. But there is a time, or times, when God is nearer to every man — readier to hear and help him — than at other times. Perhaps he is never again in life so near to us as in youth. He utters, with extraordinary emphasis and positiveness, that encouraging assurance, "They that seek me early shall find me." There is something of vernal freshness in the youthful heart which, like its face, withers and darkens under the more ardent sun of life's advancing season. It is more susceptible to all impressions — it is especially more susceptible to religious impressions — than at any subsequent period. It has a warmer, quicker confidence. It has not yet

learned the world's hard lesson of distrust. It is prepared alike for feeling and for faith. It is nearer than it ever can be again to the natural innocence of childhood. There would seem to be something in the early loveliness of its moral features which attracts the eye of God, who wishes to touch those features with the seal of holiness, that their beauty may be hallowed and immortal. Then besides, there is in youth so much of promise, both for itself and others, that we do no violence to reason in supposing the Divine Being to exert all his influence — by the agencies which He has appointed and without at all interfering with the freedom of the will — to perfect this character and fulfill its utmost promise of future usefulness. Then let the young seek the Lord ; for He will be found of them : let the young call upon Him ; for He is near to them.

Again, God is particularly near to those who deeply feel their need of his mercy and grace. That surprising conception of the sinfulness of his nature and life, that true and deep understanding of his relations with God, and that keen compunction for sin, and earnest desire to escape from its influence and consequences, present and future — which visit rarely and suddenly the heart of the sinner — are wrought by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost. It is not too much to say, that God is near to that heart which He enlightens and pierces ; that He will hear that cry which his own overwhelming revelation of Himself wrings from the awed and stricken soul. They are won-

derful things — these seasons of deep moral feeling ! They are Divine touches ; under which the spirit thrills and burns ; Divine gleams which dazzle its vision. They are spiritual oases in the desert of the hardest and driest life ; bright with verdure and beauty, and vocal with the minstrelsy of heaven. We close and slam behind us the door of our childish innocence, and rush wildly and madly out into the dark ways of sin and guilt, and wander there until we grow accustomed to the gloom and forgetful of the danger ; when suddenly, the long-closed door is opened, and a gush of home light illumines our path, and reveals to us the fearful precipice upon whose brink our careless feet have strayed ; and at the same time we see the beckoning hand and hear the kindly call of a Divine Father ; and our hearts are melted ; and we glow and burn with the wild impulse to rush into his parental arms, and never leave them more. Then let the convicted sinner seek the Lord ; for He is near to him : let him call upon the Lord ; for He will hear him.

Not so near, truly, but yet comparatively near, is God to those whose rational convictions still have power to move them to duty. It must be plain to every man who thinks, that the great essential of moral agency is a proper balance between the moral and all the other powers of the soul. One may have, naturally, more or less of intellectual and pathematic power ; but if his moral forces are not strong enough to move and control his powers of intellect and heart, it is plain that all these fine



capacities are either useless or something worse. Now this balance is—must be—perfect, when the child first arrives at years of accountability; when he first becomes a moral agent. Every transgression impairs it: the moral powers are weakened, more and more, as he advances in sin. But no man who retains the ability to obey his own convictions has quite lost it. There is still hope—help—for such a man. It may be necessary—it will be—to cultivate his moral forces to the utmost, in order to qualify him for a given moral action; that of repentance, for example. The balance is against him, though not beyond recovery. He must pile, by voluntary reflection, weight after weight into the moral scale, until he is qualified to take the first step; and then, with the Cross in his eye, and the name of Christ on his lip, let him advance. Every succeeding step will be easier than the last. The process is a rational one: he must walk in the path of every known duty without reference to feeling: after a while, if he go on, he will feel the glow, and see the light. Let him seek the Lord while He may be found: let him call upon Him while yet He is so near.

But it should be distinctly understood, and always remembered, that personal effort, unless timely and faithfully made, will avail nothing towards securing one's salvation. The text teaches us as distinctly—though only by implication—that there is a time when God will *not* be found and will *not* hear, as that there is a time when He *will* be found if sought, and *will* hear if called upon.

This time occurs, with many men, in the midst of the interests and affections of life, and with nothing to emphasize it, even to their own consciousness. They pass the limits of Divine forbearance. They rush on in sin until God is lost to them — out of sight and hearing — for any purpose of mercy. All the probabilities are against the conversion, for example, of a very aged sinner. The fount of feeling is dried up in his heart, by the fires of sin; or frozen over, with the ice of selfishness. Nothing melts him to tenderness: nothing softens him to tears. He has forgotten that he has a conscience; or it is seared: the world's hot iron has gone over it so often, that he does not shudder even at the thought of the penal fires of the damned. If he enters a church, it is from habit or curiosity, not from duty or interest in his own salvation. The Holy Spirit has been so frequently grieved away from his heart, that He has probably taken his everlasting flight, and left him to believe a lie; to hug to his soul some specious theory, with which the Devil has furnished him, and which is peculiarly efficacious in hardening his heart and preparing him for hell. What human hope for his salvation? How shall that hardened heart be melted to the heart of a little child? How shall that dead conscience be quickened and aroused? How shall that proud soul be humbled? How shall that nature, incased in selfishness, open to the timid hand and gentle knock of the angel of kindness? He is lost: as certainly lost as if hell already held him in its burning grasp.

It is generally too late, for the subject of any decided vicious passion, to seek or call successfully on God. Habit binds him with bars of adamant to his darling sin. It has grown into his nature. It has underwrought his moral and intellectual and even physical constitution. He is no longer the same man: the moral fires which would have purified his intellectual and passionate powers, and maintained them in healthful action, have been extinguished. He has lost the spiritual balance. He has no longer moral force to accomplish what lies within easy reach of his natural abilities. Intemperance has surrounded him with a cordon of fire, through which he cannot break; Impurity has confined him in a loathsome dungeon, from which he cannot escape; Avarice has bound him with golden fetters, which he cannot shake off; Indolence has stretched him upon a charmed couch, from which he cannot arise: and those fires of intemperance have stamped upon his brow and soul the brand of perdition; and his dungeon of impurity is the ante-chamber of hell; and his golden fetters will drag him to infernal fires and chain him there forever; and his couch of indolence will soon be exchanged for the burning pavements of the lost. O! if there is in the universe a thought full of concentrated horror, it is this: that a man should trifle with his own ability to be virtuous! that he should play with his capital of conscience and grace till the last stake is lost! that he should waste the strength by which he holds to God! that he should fritter away the energies by

which he may climb to heaven! that he should put out the only light which could guide him there, and go in willing darkness and voluntary chains, from the open door of heaven to an endless home in hell!

It is generally too late for those to seek religion successfully, who have been for a long time very deeply interested in purely worldly affairs. Midway in the ocean of life stands the fierce whirlpool of political excitement; and many a gay bark has gone down in its roaring depths, to be seen no more till its shattered fragments are driven, by the last death-storm, upon the dark rocks of eternity. There is a charm in the excitement of political life, which few are able to withstand; and which, having once been deeply felt, hardly any one is able to shake off. Few professional politicians have any religion in their politics; and fewer still ever turn heartily from politics to religion. The same is true of most other secular professions, the mastery of which requires the long-continued application of a high class of intellectual powers. Insensibly they acquire a mastery over the moral faculties. The profession — the science — receives the veneration and affection which are due to God. By dint of long looking at the same object, it acquires an unjust and monstrous proportion to the mental eye. There is induced a useless and unnatural antagonism between employment and duty. The profession has mastered the man, instead of the man having mastered the profession: he is its slave. So with simple business — money-

making — it generally absorbs both intellect and heart. These people have no time for religion. The impression of the Sabbath's sermon, if they hear one, is easily erased by the tramping footsteps of week-day cares. And so they will go on until in all probability they will awake in hell.

It is almost always too late for the dying to seek, effectually, the God whom they have scorned and slighted all their lives. I know we shall turn, in thought, to the penitent thief. But there may be a vital difference between his case and ours. There certainly is such a difference. *He* had probably never been instructed in religion; had never heard the Gospel; had led the wild and ignorant life of an outlaw; until, at its bloody close, he came to look upon the ineffable agonies of the dying Son of God, and found new and everlasting life in that glance of penitence and faith. But *we!* — we have always had the Gospel; but we have closed our ears and hearts against it; we have contemned and despised it; we have trampled it under our feet; we have seared our consciences; we have insulted the Holy Spirit; we have mocked God: and think we now, when we come to die and send up our cry of mingled anguish and despair to heaven, that He will hear it? O no! We deceive ourselves. Says He not — and for this very reason that He called and we refused, He stretched out his hand and none of us regarded — that He will laugh at our calamity and mock when our fear cometh? Be sure He will do it. What! are we leaning on

this broken reed? Are we looking to the pain, the stupor, the fear, and the delirium of a dying hour, for that mental collectedness and intense application of soul, which are absolutely essential to all effective calling on God?

It is too late — forever too late — for the dead to seek God. It remains for the wicked dead but to be judged and punished. The Judgment — O *that* Judgment! when the thrones shall be set, and the books opened, and the universe assembled! What will the sinner's prayer avail then? It will be too late. "God have mercy upon me!" he may cry; but God the Father will reply "Too late!" "Christ have mercy upon me!" and the long-suffering Son will answer, "Too late!" "Holy Ghost have mercy upon me!" and the Divine Comforter will have no word of compassion left — He can only say, "Too late!" "Angels intercede for me!" and angelic voices may respond — in tones whose melody will mock the bitter burden of their answer — "Too late!" "Friends of earth — husband, wife, parent, child — plead for me!" and earthly friends may reply, with perhaps the latest tears they shall ever shed, "Too late! — too late!" Therefore, let us seek the Lord while He may be found: let us call upon Him while He is near.

## XIX.

### THE PRISONERS OF HOPE.

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

THE text is an alarm-cry; the warning of the watchman; the shout of the sentinel; the first gun of the picket; prelude to danger, battle, and death.

The scene is a hostile world; an enemy's country; an alien and unfriendly soil; upon which, lying encamped and wrapped in dreamless slumber, or wandering gayly forth on a thousand errands of pleasure or of profit, all unconscious of danger, are an innumerable host of men. These are termed “prisoners of hope;” and consist of all impenitent and unbelieving souls.

There is great force, as well as perfect accuracy in the figure; because the chain which binds all unbelieving men to a life of sinful impenitency, in which they are exposed to the dangers of eternal death, is forged of the myriad links of a false and delusive hope of happiness, in the possession of the objects of their passionate and worldly pursuit.

To instance: a very large class — perhaps a majority of all the men in the world — devote their lives to making money; under the influence

of the hope that its possession,— the comforts and luxuries which it will buy, the social consideration which it will procure them — will render them happy. And yet no man ever was, or ever will be rendered even content, by such a means. Increased possessions bring always increased anxieties ; and above all, the passion for accumulation grows by what it feeds on ; and a rich man is never satisfied that he has enough. All this is patent and notorious ; yet men are imprisoned to life-long toil, chained like the galley-slave to his oar, by the hope of finding happiness in the possession of riches.

A much smaller class are bent on making for themselves a name ; or carving their own on some lofty and splendid niche in the temple of fame. Of course nearly all these generous and high-souled enthusiasts of youth and hope are wrecked, and go down with a broad sea of years between them and the haven for which they sailed ; and even the few who reach it find but a chill and desert isle ; an elevated and dreary solitude ; whence the groans of their unrest may sound wider through the world. But this does not deter others. Not a few of the best and brightest of this world are prisoners to the wild and futile hope of finding happiness in earthly fame.

Some, with coarser and harder natures, struggle only for power. They are comparatively indifferent to reputation. They desire the very substance of authority. They would rather be “ the power behind the throne,” than the throne itself. Among



these, a few stern and highly-gifted spirits may grasp the sceptre and hold it, until they are crushed and mangled and slain, by its deadly and malignant weight ; but others stand ready and eager to raise and clasp the fallen death ; and all unwarned, from the greatest to the least, these souls are prisoners to the false hope of finding peace and rest in the possession of authority.

Others, more spiritual, refined, and pure, seek their bliss in the wide realm of knowledge and thought. In intellectual culture—the broadest, the highest, the deepest possible to men—they will find their heaven. To this they sacrifice health and strength, and all the sweet influences of society and of home. And all this, but to render themselves more painfully aware of their own ignorance ; and at last, perhaps, like the neophyte of the Rosicrucian sage, to sink down, withered and appalled, under the first frightful caress of the awful “Dweller of the Threshold,” and be haunted through life, by the ghost of her horrid eyes. Thus, while Knowledge leads so many of her disciples to sorrow, despair, and madness, she deludes them, perpetually, with the vain hope of happiness.

Others look for happiness in the cultivation and practice of the private and social virtues. Honesty, chastity, temperance, and beneficence, are the very corners of their being—the lines within which they dwell, and on which they depend for safety and comfort. But all these virtues, instead of the effects of an inward spiritual life, which they

counterfeit, are mere political instrumentalities, skillfully used for the end of temporal gain. In a word, these seeming virtues are a subtle refinement in the worst of all sins, which is selfishness; a making clean of the outside, while "within they are full of extortion and excess." But the hope of the gain of this grand and beautiful hypocrisy, binds its devotees like an iron chain.

A great many, I believe, admit in theory, all that the Gospel claims; are convinced that without repentance, faith, and a holy life, they must be unhappy here and forever; but they think there is time enough yet. They hope for ample leisure and opportunity, in the future, to make their peace with God. One after another, they are dropping and dying, all unprepared; but this does not alarm the survivors. They are prisoners to a false and delusive hope of future time and opportunity to repent.

Then the butterflies of fashion, of all ages and of both sexes, that wanton through life, and live on its glitter and gaud! whose stars are the gas-lights of the theatre and the ball-room, and whose nature is paint, and powder, and enamel, and perfume! whose young are nurtured on reptile food, and poisoned by parental hands! Who can doubt that a wild dream of shadowy and unreal bliss imprisons them to their hastening doom? imprisons them in a moral darkness so absolute and dense, that scarce one ray of the truth which would make them free, can reach their blinded souls?

Infidelity itself is prisoner, indeed, to some fiend-like hope of escape, by dark, devious, and uncertain ways, from the terrible responsibilities of a life of truth and reality. It would lose itself in some tangled thicket of speculation, where God and duty and destiny cannot find it. And there it abides, not unfrequently, in the darkness and damp and mildew of sin, till the sleuth-hound Death, wakes it from its foul lair, and bays it to the fearful weapons of the judgment to come!

Even the atheist is prisoner to his vain hope that death is a dreamless sleep. The sensualist—the drunkard, glutton, impure man, voluptuary—does he not hope by gross pleasures to satisfy his soul, and outbid the anguish of the future? Even the basest and blackest criminal, who reeks with lust, and “romps with murder,” proposes to himself some heaven of revenge, some paradise of malevolence, where his dark soul shall find at last, repose.

These, all, are the “prisoners of hope;” bound by a gloomy and unconscious chain, immured in unseen walls, far from the haven of purity, and exposed to immortal death.

In the very centre of this earthly plain, and upon the highest point, within sight and hearing of all those “prisoners of hope” who wander or repose upon its surface, there stands a “stronghold.” This term, as all will understand, implies simply a fastness; as a fortified city, a fort, a castle or fortress, a citadel, a place made strong for defense, and secure against assaults. In times

contemporaneous with the author of the text, nearly all cities were fortified places, or strongholds. We may thus easily understand the origin of the figure. These walled cities, or strongholds, were few and far between. The intervening country, whether desert or mountain, was the home of the savage beast and more savage robber. All journeys were perilous — all wanderers in danger. Safety was to be found only in the fortresses, where men combined and builded for mutual defense. The baronial castles of the feudal age, in Europe, come nearer to our own times, and illustrate the text almost equally well; as indeed, may a chain of forts on an Indian frontier in our own country, when the tribes are hostile. Without, there is constant danger of violence and death; within, there is security and peace.

Now, in the very centre of this fiend-haunted earth, God has built a "Stronghold" for the imperiled race of man. He has built it upon the highest peak of Time, and in the very meridian of human existence. It is based upon the blood-stained rocks of Mount Calvary, and rises cruciform, extending its sheltering arms to all the world. Its fleshly walls are wide enough to embrace every wanderer upon the desert of this life. Its celestial forces are strong and numerous enough to make it good, forever, against the combined arms of Sin, Suffering, Death, and Hell. The name of this stronghold is Jesus Christ, and its meaning, the God-Man, our Saviour.

Now, at every salient angle of the walls of this

stronghold, there is erected a bastion, or protecting outwork, which we have learned to call the Church. I am not unwilling to admit that the Roman Catholics hold one, that the Greek Church occupies another, the Protestant Episcopalians a third; and to claim that those ecclesiastical organizations which are stigmatized, by zealous churchmen as sectaries — Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists, and others — hold, each, their separate outwork of defense, all built upon the Stronghold, Jesus Christ.

Again, each of these ecclesiastical bastions is surmounted by a turret, or watch-tower, which we term the pulpit; and where, in every age, are stationed the sentinels of God. From the barred gates of a lost Eden, to the conflagration of a lost world, each age has had, and will have, its sentinel-watchmen, stationed on every turret of the stronghold Jesus Christ, to discern the coming danger from afar, and warn the unwary reveler without the walls, to seek instant safety within the citadel. These watchmen speak only as they are taught. On the floating flag above them, they read the message of warning and of mercy. The Old Testament, in its type and symbol, and the New Testament, in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the banner of the stronghold; far-floating, through every clime, that all may see, and emblazoned with every tongue, that all may read, the mercy and the love of God. These are expressed on the banner, in a thousand forms and phrases, — in innumerable and ever-varying trope

and metaphor, — in order to arouse the attention and engage the thoughts of the unconscious and imperiled millions of the race, who remain without the stronghold. These varying expressions, caught by the eyes of the watchmen from the banner, are blown, repeated, through the Gospel trumpet, in myriad tones of faith and feeling, that some may hear, who will not see their danger and their safety.

And thus it comes that I, a God-sent and God-appointed man, standing on this watch-tower of the stronghold of salvation, have caught this sentinel-cry, and sound it in your ears to-day: “Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.”

The sudden and apparently causeless change of number, here, arrests the attention and distracts the thought: “ye prisoners of hope,” and “I will render double unto *thee*.” The plural form, in the first address, implies the universality of the call. “God, our Saviour, — will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” All are equally endangered; all fallen, all depraved, all sinful, all doomed, all exposed to the fell executioner of the wrath of outraged justice. Among these, God has no choice, no favorites, no elect. He “is no respecter of persons.” He will save one as soon as another. He *would* save all. He wills not that any should perish; but rather that all should turn and live. He loves all alike, with the riches of a boundless

compassion. He has built this stronghold,— at infinite expense to Himself, in testimony of this love for the safety of every human soul. Therefore, in his universal call, He must use the plural form: “Turn *you* to the stronghold, *ye* prisoners of hope!”

But while redemption is universal, salvation is particular and individual. The stronghold is built for all; but not all will enter its precious gates; and force cannot be applied to a moral agent to induce an act of virtue; because, with its application, he ceases to be a moral agent. Thus, while all are cordially and lovingly invited, such only will enter the stronghold, as freely choose to do so. Salvation becomes, therefore, of necessity, personal; and to each complying soul, God speaks in the singular form: “I will render double unto thee.”

The promise, “I will render double,” in its specific quality, refers, obviously, to the penitent sinner’s past and future life: “I will pardon all thy sinful past—I will reward all thy faithful future.” In other terms, all the wicked actions of the penitent’s past life are to be blotted out, to be as if they had never been, to be forgiven and forgotten. He is to be received and welcomed, as if he had never sinfully wandered; and to be homed, within the stronghold, as if he had never perversely left its walls. This is, indeed, a most royal, kingly, and God-like idea of forgiveness. It is something higher and purer and better than Earth had ever conceived of, before it was Divinely

revealed ; and even now that God has uttered it in her ear, she can hardly apprehend it with her soul. A convicted criminal is the subject of executive clemency : how is he regarded by the pardoner and by the other and unoffending members of the state ? as one who had never sinned ? Hardly. A friend has betrayed, insulted, or wronged you ; and you pardon him ; but is it, with you and him, thereafter, as if he had never sinned against you ? Not quite. But this assurance we have, on Christ's own warrant, that in proportion as we have power to forgive and *forget*, do we approach, in character, the likeness of the Divine. This boon, then, of full and complete forgiveness to the penitent sinner, is simply heavenly in its origin, and unexampled in its immensity. But when we remember that, superadded to this tremendous benediction of the love of God, — this Divine exorcism which lays all the ghosts and demons of canceled crime, — there is a heaven of purity, and virtue, and bliss, and power, and glory, and a career of immortal progress in all these, we gain some feeble sense of the propriety of the expression, "I will render double unto thee."

By the light of this splendid assurance, we may see, with clearer vision, the emphasis which is laid, in the text, upon the point of time : "even to-day !" As if God had said, "Because to-day is yours, and to-morrow may not be ! Because, the light of your lives is flickering in the socket of to-day, and may be extinguished forever, on the coming morrow ! Because the sun of your last hope



is sinking in the western sky of to-day, and will not rise again to-morrow! Therefore, even to-day, turn you to the stronghold!" And this same emphasis summons, with cumulative power our fearful remembrance, to all the warnings of the past: as if God said, "Even to-day! though I have warned you many a time and oft before, and ye would not heed the warning; though, through friends and kindred, living and dying, I sent you many a tender appeal; though, through the voice of a thousand heralds of the Cross, ye have heard the summons, and slighted it; yet, to-day, even to-day do I declare, that, if thou wilt turn by true repentance and living faith to the Stronghold, Jesus Christ, I will render double unto thee."

## XX.

### THE "GENTLENESS" OF CHRIST.

"I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." — 2 COR. X. 1.

THERE were malcontents in the Corinthian Church. It was broken into parties and torn with dissensions. The question was one of discipline. Should the law be enforced? should the guilty be punished? should the proud be humbled? There were not wanting men to oppose this. Some, heady and insubordinate, feared lest the discipline might fall upon themselves, and did not scruple to resent the interference and malign the character of St. Paul himself. Others, through a lax administration, were disagreeably startled by the announcement that such a power inhered in the ministry, and might be exercised at need. Others were timid, and dreaded more the disturbances which would ensue from the violent resistance of the disaffected, than the evils under which the Church was slowly dying. Altogether, they were indisposed to the work of discipline.

And in all this, if we except the perverse and wicked among them, they were not much, if at all, to blame. Their feelings were natural, if erroneous. They had not fully weighed and considered

the question. They knew not why the hurt might not be slightly healed, and all still go on as usual. They did not comprehend that discipline was essential to the prosperity of the Church — the last test of her spiritual vitality ; failing under which, she was already dead. They knew and thought of none of these things, and therefore they naturally shrank from the disturbance and turmoil of a battle for the right. They feared its issue. They were not certain that it would end in the triumph of the right. The opposers and contemners of law were strong, bold, and popular. By the arts of the demagogue, combined with the advantages of fortune, they had made themselves a party in the Church ; and these would stand around, support, and fence them from the shafts of discipline. So that, after all, the Church might be disturbed by a vain and fruitless effort, and no good be accomplished. They deprecated, therefore, the administration of the law, and the cutting off of offenders.

To meet the difficulties of this embarrassing case, and still assert the majesty and preserve the integrity of law and order in the Church, St. Paul, holding in expressed reserve his power to command their obedience, proceeds, first, to beseech them to meet the issue and dare the discipline, "by the gentleness of Christ."

"The gentleness of Christ !" We say of a lamb, it is gentle, and Christ was the Lamb of God ; we say of a little child, it is gentle ; and Christ was a little Child ; we say of an amiable and affectionate

woman, she is gentle ; and Christ had all the tenderness, softness, and sympathy of the female heart ; and we sometimes say of a noble, generous, brave, unselfish, and high-souled man, he is gentle — a gentle man — a gentleman ; and Christ was the embodiment and personification of manly gentleness.

Now the gentleness of the lamb and the little child is a thing apart and different in kind from the other forms of this quality which we have instanced. Its chief constituents are harmlessness and helplessness. Its subjects are incapable, alike of wrong and of violence. Only wolves, seeking a pretence to devour, complain of the encroachments of the lamb ; only wolfish men, wanting a pretence to destroy, like Herod and Richard III., are apprehensive of harm from childhood. And this modification of gentleness was a prime element in the character of Christ. He was " holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And He was helpless, too, as a lamb, or a little child, or any other helpless thing ; alike for offense and defense. From his birth to his death, He was gagged and bound ; not with the coarse iron implements which men consecrate to that torture, but with the stronger curb and chain of his Father's will. This restraining influence we cannot always see ; because it is spiritual, and our eyes are dim for such sights ; and because He does not often display it. Occasionally, indeed, it breaks in a human moan from his dumb lips and writhing limbs ; as when the twelve-year boy made answer

to his mother's reproof, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" or when, in the garden, kneeling on the bloody threshold of his great agony, the strong man groaned, "Father, Thy will be done."

But the gentleness of Christ, which lay in his helplessness, was of a higher sort than that of the lamb and the child—it was a conscious helplessness. Unconscious impotence rests in a happy quiet; conscious impotence writhes and groans. The lamb and the child know nothing of their helplessness, and are happy; the manacled man feels the iron restraint, and is miserable. And the suffering is always proportionate to the intensity of the energies repressed. A strong, healthy, hardy, active, and athletic man will pine to death, under bonds which a feeble, diseased cripple will sustain without comparative injury. Now the helplessness of Christ was the manacle of the man, and the conscious suffering of the strong man, whose energies are held in from their natural flow to action. His was the second perfect physical organism of this earth. Physically, He was mightier than the sons of men. Strength unequalled, skill unmatched, and spirit soaring over all, were held in a forceful and unquiet rest, by his voluntary submission to his Father's will. O! He was gentle as the Lamb of God, led, by the cord of an infinite destiny, through all the weary ways of his earthly years—led consciously to his own slaughter! O! He was gentle as the Child of all the ages, lost in the wilderness of this world, cast upon

the pirate cruelties of reckless and wicked men, mute at the bidding of his iron nurse, and patient of the blows that rent away his innocent life! And those cruel, reckless robbers are you and I; for our sins did nail Him to the tree!

The gentleness of the refined and educated woman is another modification of this quality. Its foundation is a temper affectionate, unselfish, and kind. Upon this is reared a superstructure of generous and lofty mental culture. And over all there is thrown, like the last finish of a beautiful temple, the adorning refinements of cultivated society. These three elements compose the gentlewoman; that is, so far as she is distinguished from the ungentle woman. But there is, in her gentleness, a peculiar and subtile element, which eludes the common analysis, but which yet we always have in mind when we speak of the gentleness of woman. And this element resides, essentially, in her sex. It is in the female soul, spirit, and mind that we look for a certain refined and touching gentleness, that is softer, purer, sweeter, and more beautiful, like her person, than the corresponding sentiment in man. It is more delicate and ethereal, more yielding, more intuitive, quicker to perceive the needs of others, defter to minister, and, at the same time more easily shocked and wounded.

Now, this peculiar modification of gentleness, we may and must attribute, in all its ideal spiritual and sensitive perfection, to Christ. He was gentle as a woman — gentler than the gentlest woman. He aggregated in his heart all the purest, tender-

est, and deepest susceptibilities of womanly nature ; from the timid, tender woman-child to the aged and almost sainted mother. There is not, has not been, will not be, one single gentle impulse in a female heart, whose counterpart and fellow is not found in the heart of Christ. And this is true, from two considerations ; first, his humanity was womanity ; He was not man of man, but man of woman. All his manhood came through womanhood ; passed through the sea of her soul, and was baptized with its tearful tenderness. Hence, his boundless sympathy for every form of suffering ; a sympathy so vast and tender that it transferred every human pain to his own bosom. And secondly, He must needs have had this nature to be the Saviour of woman. Otherwise, He could not have been touched with the feeling of her infirmities, nor tempted, in all points, like unto her. Hence, the gentleness of Christ is the gentleness of woman. It is beautiful, and tender, and touching, and appealing. It is eloquent with the sensibility of love, and the sensibility of beneficence. It weeps alike at the grave of personal friendship, and over the apprehended calamities of a nation. "The gentleness of Christ!" "We beseech you by the gentleness of Christ!" The words have all the touching and appealing power of woman's tears, and tenderness, and trust.

But the gentleness of Christ was also the gentleness of a perfect man ; and herein his character took on its latest and most powerful finish. "The grand old name of gentleman" has been

much abused and sadly prostituted in this modern age. Its accidents have been mistaken for its essence. To instance, in the earlier days of our civilization, it was generally found associated with wealth, leisure, and the polished courtesies of the best society. Successive generations of wealth and culture were thought necessary to the production of the character. Perhaps this was true; for class distinctions were arbitrary, and broad, and deep. It might very well be that those lofty barriers, and vast distances, and deep gulfs, of social separation could only be surmounted, passed, and bridged by the powerful accessories which we have named. But, in the progress of the centuries, all this was changed. The barriers were removed, the separating distances overcome, the gorges filled up and forgotten. Gentle blood flowed wide from the acres of the ancestral park, and was drunk by the common earth of poverty and toil. The whole social soil was enriched; and here and there, the world over, unaccountably to most minds, there sprang up the gentleman. His sudden appearance in strange places, untutored by the nursing ages, has effected a confusion in the conceptions of almost all men. They have forgotten what makes a gentleman, or they never knew. With some, it is wealth; with others, education; with others, correct principles; and with others, an agreeable and fashionable address: as if we did not daily see wealth, with the ignorance of the clown; education, with the manners of the boor; honesty, as often in servants as their employers; and fashion-



able and pleasant manners covering the tiger heart of the villain. Nay, these are but the accidents of gentle blood; of late, perhaps, no more than its occasional incidents. He is a gentleman, who is one inwardly; and that is gentleness, which is of the heart, and whose Gospel name is Love. Everything else which the world calls gentleman, or gentlewoman, is a base and spurious counterfeit; stuffed with learning, stamped with power, gilt with riches, and polished with seeming courtesy, it is still nothing but base metal; and the angel teller will reject it at the heavenly counter, and cast it into the gulf of hell, and suffer it to cheat the world no more forever.

Another very successful imitator of the gentle nature, is a certain easiness of disposition, which is "all things to all men," that it may stand well with all—that it may be popular; but this is a combination of dullness and cowardice, which is easily recognized and always contemned, however it may be tolerated. It is made up in the various forms of toady, trimmer, man of policy; still, it is not uncommon to hear it said of such an one, "he is a perfect gentleman!" Gentleman, indeed! He is the loathing of a gentleman's soul. There is not enough of original *man* in him on which to graft gentleness.

The very highest form of the manly-gentle character is one whose soul is first cast in the largest and finest mould of manliness, and then baptized with the spirit of Love. He is in sympathy with all that is pure, noble, and high; and will die in their

defense, if need be, as easily and naturally as he will live in their light. He hates all wrong, meanness, and cowardice, with a perfect hatred; and, if possible would banish them from the earth. The essence of this character, in its perfection, is, the very highest appetites, propensities, passions, and powers of the human soul, tempered and restrained by love. And such, preëminently, was the gentleness of Christ. It was no mawkish, maudlin, sentimental goodness; it was fiery, earnest, and strong. It could wield the scourge, utter the denunciation, and thunder the judgment against impenitent wickedness; while it could receive and embrace penitent wickedness, in its lowest and most abandoned forms. The gentleness of Christ is the incarnate expression of the chivalry of Heaven; it is mounted upon infinite perfections, and armed with the lightnings of infinite Power, against the dragon Evil, in all his foul transformations; while, at the same time, it stops, in mid-course, to listen to the wail of the helpless and minister to the wants of the needy. Behold Him, in that last charge against Death and Hell, which he made on Calvary, reeking with the blood of his own wounds, with the sword of his enemies rioting in his heart, stop to look down on a mother's tears, and comfort her aching heart with the words, "Woman, behold thy son!" Such is the gentleness of Christ.

## XXI.

### THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“I am the light of the world.” — JOHN viii. 12.

AMONG all the figurative characters of Christ which we find in the Bible, few are more interesting and suggestive than that in which He proclaims Himself “the light of the world.” It is of frequent occurrence in all parts of the Scriptures. The Jewish rabbins think that the Messiah is intended in Genesis i. 3, where God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” Their comment is to this effect: “From this we may learn that the holy and blessed God saw the light of the Messiah and his works before the world was created; and reserved it for the Messiah and his generation, under the throne of his glory. Satan said to the holy and blessed God, ‘For whom dost thou reserve that light which is under the throne of thy glory?’ God answered, ‘For Him who shall subdue thee, and overwhelm thee with confusion.’ Satan rejoined, ‘Lord of the universe, show that Person to me.’ God said, ‘Come and see Him.’ When he saw Him, he was greatly agitated, and fell upon his face, saying, ‘Truly, this is the Messiah, who shall cast me and idolaters into hell.’”

The prophet Isaiah, looking through eight hun-

dred years, to the coming of our Lord, and speaking in the name of the Almighty, says, "I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and give thee for a covenant of the people, and for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."

Malachi, prophesying four hundred years before the coming of Christ, says, "Unto you that fear My name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings."

The Evangelist Matthew, quoting from Isaiah, says, "The people which sat in darkness saw great Light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, Light is sprung up."

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, says St. Luke, when suddenly relieved from his miraculous dumbness, was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, "Through the tender mercy of God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give Light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace."

St. John says of Christ, "In Him was life; and the life was the Light of men. And the Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. John the Baptist was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And Christ Himself says, "As long as I am in the world, I

am the Light of the world. Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while ye have Light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of Light. I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness. I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of life."

And this "Son of Man" is fully justified, it would seem, in the claim which He sets up to be the "Light of the world;" though we were to take Him literally, and understand that claim in the most extended sense of the words employed. He might, with all propriety be considered even the material "Light of the world;" for He it is that supplies, and has always supplied, the material world with light. He is its Divine Creator. "By Him all things were made; and without Him was not anything made that was made." He gave the earth and sun, and all things else which pertain to the mechanism of the universe, their birth, and form, and place, and motions; and ordained the laws which should fix them in their respective spheres. His was the hand which lighted, originally, that great central torch on which so many worlds depend, and which has since made it to burn on for thousands of years unconsumed. He pervades immensity, upholding all things by the word of his power.

Besides, He saved the world, and all that it con-

tains, from premature destruction. Its earliest inhabitants violated the divine law. The penalty was death; immortality was forfeited; the flames of justice were waiting to do their final office on the world. The curtain which should enshroud the sun, and quench his light forever, was trembling in the hand of the waiting angel; when Christ threw back the gathering darkness, by casting his resistless light before it, and proclaiming that He would suffer the penalty of man's sin; while the world should live on and have another trial. He was thus doubly entitled to be regarded, even in a material sense, as "The Light of the world."

And if the influence of his grace still preserves it from year to year, is not his claim thereby strengthened? Take away the grace of Jesus Christ out of the world; take away "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" take away Christ's Holy Spirit, "the manifestation of which is given to every man, that he may profit withal;" take away the Bible, which Jesus Christ gave the world; and morally, what would be the condition of our race? Could antediluvian wickedness furnish its parallel? Not by a million fold; and the wicked of that day were swept from the earth by a flood! Could Sodom and Gomorrah become its type? But in one thing: the fiery deluge which overwhelmed them as it would consume the earth; in all else those cities would have the advantage! If, then, Christ made the world and lighted it originally; if He sustains it in existence from day to day; if his interposition pre-

vented its premature destruction ; and if his grace still preserves it in being : could even the largest construction of his words, when He says, " I am the Light of the world," convict Him of extravagance or impropriety ?

In a still closer, more direct, and efficient sense, Christ is the intellectual " Light of the world." We refer not now to the patent truth that, from his grand and all-creating intelligence, sprang all forms and endowments of sentient life ; but to the immediate influence of his Gospel upon the forces and activities of the world of mind. Striking illustrations of this influence are as numerous, in every community, as true Christians. Whoever submits, sincerely, to the Gospel of the Grace of God, gains by that submission the highest attainable stimulus to his intellectual powers. The humblest and most besotted intelligence to be found among the ignorant and degraded masses of a great city, if brought under the evangelizing influence of the Gospel, shall emerge from its darkness, its ignorance, and its crime ; shall gather, day after day, slowly, indeed, but certainly, knowledge, thought, capacity, power ; until the most skeptical shall recognize and concede the attributes of manhood in the being who, a little while ago, was under the habitual and apparently hopeless domination of appetites and passions simply brutal. Seek, again, the largest and most affluent intellectual endowment which a large city contains ; add to this all the advantages of liberal and patient culture ; endow it with the largest experience, gift it with the most glorious

worldly success, and stimulate it with the most passionate ambition. Here, then, we have all that nature and circumstance can do for the man intellectually. And he *is* a great man, in one sense; and yet he is a mean man and a little, in another; for all his intellectual exercises are contracted within the narrow circle of his selfish cravings. He has great powers; but they are cramped and dwarfed. He is an eagle caged — a lion chained. Unbar the cage, break off the chain, and the swoop of his mighty pinions and the lash of his agile strength shall seem, comparatively, to devour the earth and air. Now this is precisely what religion does for the kingliest souls; it sets them free to soar sunward and explore the earth. It unchains, unprisons, rouses, and expands them.

And just here there lies a fair appeal to the memory and the consciousness of Christian men. When they have loitered on their journey, and lingered so long and so far behind their Master, that the last echo of his retreating footsteps has been lost to their listening souls; when the last glimmer of the halo round his holy brow has faded from their darkening vision; when the shadow of neglected duty and the cloud of dark temptation have shut them in; when forked paths, and mists, and midnight, and uncertainty, have bewildered and perplexed them, until they knew not which way to turn; when Experience nor Reason would hear their voice nor answer to their call, save to perplex and deceive them; and when fierce and inexorable Necessity, threatening wrong, ruin, and



doom has compelled them to choose some path and move in some direction — albeit they knew not whether it were good or evil, right or wrong, safe or perilous ; and they have essayed to go forward, and stumbled and fallen, upon the brink of destruction ; and there, in misery and agony, called upon their lost Guide, until the shrieks of their spiritual anguish pierced his ear, and He has returned in loving gentleness to their side : O, then, how the light has shone, and the shadows flown ! and how Faith has caught the hand of the Master, and been led by Him out of the dark and tangled thicket of sin, where the precipices of ruin frowned and beetled on every hand, into the broad highway of holiness ; where they have knelt with streaming eyes and humbled hearts, and promised never again to leave his side ! How often has this occurred, in the experience of the Christian — no difference what the grade of his understanding — until he has been forced to realize that, for all the ends even of practical wisdom, Christ is “the Light of the world” to him !

Besides these considerations, there remain the patent arguments of the intellectual effects of the Gospel upon communities, great and small. A river or frontier village, or neighborhood, destitute of Christian organization or influence — an occasional example of which may yet be found, in this country — is, as all know well who have ever found themselves, even for a little while in such a spot, “a small but active representation of hell upon earth.” The brutal dissipation, the reckless-

ness of right, the bloody violence, of such communities, who has not heard of and shuddered at? The light of intelligence is quenched by the deadly sin-damp; which is worse than the miner's choke-damp. But let the Gospel be carried to such a locality, no difference by how humble an instrumentality, and how soon and plainly may one mark the quickening effect upon the minds of the degraded population. First, a church and a Sunday-school, then a day-school, an academy, a college, and all the evidences and fruits of intellectual culture brighten over the land. So just are the words of Christ, even if taken in an intellectual sense, when he says, "I am the Light of the world."

But once more, and above all — in a sense higher, purer, grander, and more intimate — in a sense all-eminent and accurate, "Christ is the spiritual Light of the world." He who said, "Let there be light!" uttered greater words when He said, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." This was the first star that rose out of the deeps of heaven, to shed its soft and gentle radiance upon an utterly darkened world. This was the first appearance, above the world's horizon, of the star of Bethlehem. It was the star of hope; and, for a long time, it was the only light in the sky of this world. It was the one long, steady look of love which the heavens gave to sinful man. All else was darkness, or darkness broken by the lurid flashes of doom — the lightnings of the guardian sword of a lost Eden. But, as the dim ages rolled on, other stars of hope and

promise clustered around it, drawn by the magnetic force of love, until the whole heavens seemed aglow with starry promises and harbingers of a coming day. There were lights in the gorgeous East; and lights rising above the sad ruins of the darkened West; and stellar glories in the distant North; and something brighter than Magellan clouds in the warm South; and spanning the central arch, an unbanked river of Providence and promise — the milky way of prophecy — flowed ever broadening on.

But lo! the dawn approaches! Hark to the golden chimes of heaven, filling all the air with the music of celestial matins! The ears of faithful watchers catch the sound, and they turn to the glowing orient; where, already, pale streaks of the coming Glory — the index fingers of the herald angels — shine and tremble in their eager pointing. Then a richer, deeper glow suffuses half the sky; the purple light of glory clinging to the garments of the coming Sun of Righteousness. Dimmer and dimmer fade the starry promises from out the minds and memories of men; colder and colder falls the morning twilight; redder and redder glows the eastern hope; till, suddenly, at last, the Glory breaks, and the song of the attendant angels wakes the world: "Glory be to God in the highest: on earth peace, good-will to men!" But alas! alas! This glorious and Divine Sun rose in the clouds of poverty and humility, ran his lonely course through the human heavens, and set in blood, and tears, and death. And yet, joy! joy! He rose again and

shineth forever ! He faded from our eyes but to fill our hearts, and light them on their happy way to everlasting life !

This is the "Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world ;" that lights up the soul of every individual of the race ; that chases away the darkness of depravity ; that dispels from his mind the gloom of spiritual blindness and ignorance ; that shows man to himself ; that reveals to him "The Light of life ;" that breaks away the heavy cloud of spiritual infirmity, and enables him to rise to a higher and purer moral atmosphere ; so that even the far-off heathen may be led by its guiding ray, to the gate of eternal life.

This is the Light that dispels the mystery of our being ; that shows us who we are, and whence we came, and by what sad circumstance we have been made wretched ; that lights up the ages long gone by, and shows us how our first parents fell, and how we inherit their unholy nature ; that reveals to us, so clearly that we need not err therein, the principles and conditions of the new probation on which we are placed in this world ; that shows us that we are moral agents, and that our destiny is in our own hands ; and that sends its piercing rays to the other world ; showing us, as the reward of our faithfulness, the endless glories of heaven ; and, as the doom of our wickedness, the ceaseless torments of hell.

This is the Light that shines on the dark pages of the Book of Providence ; showing us how those natural evils, of which the world is full, are conse-

quent upon the fall; upon the introduction of sin into the world; or are lasting effects of the just judgments of God upon its wicked inhabitants; that disease, violence, and misfortune, as well as health, safety, and prosperity, are but other names for the voices by which God calls us to repentance; and that when our children are taken away, in helpless infancy, it is that they may be happy, and that we may be induced to follow them and share their joy.

This is the Light that illumines "the valley and shadow of death," so that this dreary passage has no terrors for the Christian; that shone in Joseph's new rock-hewn tomb, on that memorable morning, so many hundred years ago, when a mighty angel came down from heaven, and rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat thereon; that blinded and overthrew the Roman guard; that broke the bands of death, by which the Saviour had been three days bound, and poured upon the rude walls which shut Him in, the radiant glories of the upper heaven; and ever since, it has been shining there, and will shine on, till time and graves shall be no more. This is the Light, whence come those two twin rays of hope and joy which shine on every Christian's grave, and gild it with the promise of eternal life; which fills the dying Christian's eye, and sets a halo on his brow; of whose glorious beauty, the lips of Childhood have uttered strange, incomprehensible things; and which shows us One, on whose strong arm and loving breast we may lean, in our passage through

the valley and shadow of death, and reveals to our enraptured vision the gates of pearl and angel hands which wait and beckon for us, a little further on.

“I am the Light of the world!” What glorious words! what broad and massy words! “The Light of the *world!*” of the whole world! of every individual in the world! No dark reprobate, on whom this Light falls not! No benighted heathen, whose soul is not illumined by its beams! No hardened, crime-stained wretch, whose dark and downward path to death and hell, is not crossed by a ray of this Divine Light, broad enough, and bright enough, if he will turn and follow it, to lead him to pardon, purity, and lasting peace. “The *Light* of the world!” without which, the world would be wrapped in midnight darkness—in worse than Egyptian gloom! “The *Light* of the world!” the moral Pharos, whose beams reveal to our storm-tossed planet, the rocks on which, if heedless, she may strike; and the harbor which, if diligent and wary, she may gain! Shall we love it less because it shines on all? Him? “the Light of the world? shall we love Him less because of his humility?—because of his manger cradle?—of his poverty, who had not where to lay his head? Because of his sorrowing, suffering life? Because of his shameful death? Because He comes to us “with garments rolled in blood?” Because He “comes from Bozrah with dyed garments?” Whose humility did He assume? For whose sake did He empty Himself of infinite riches and be-

come poor, that they might be rich? In whose behalf did He battle with sin and death and hell, till "his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men, and his vesture dipped in blood?" For our sake. Then, shall we love Him less because He was not of the earthly great? Nay, rather infinitely more. Henceforth, forever hallowed be the humble places where He dwelt! Hallowed be his poverty, his tears, his groans, his sufferings, his death, his grave! Yea, and they shall be forever hallowed, forever blest, forever bright! Has He not said, "Henceforth, blessed are the poor, the humble, the mourners, the sufferers, the dying, the dead?" Yea, all shall be blessed, who warmly, lovingly, and gratefully, receive and follow the light which He sends.

If He be "the Sun of Righteousness," it would seem, the Church should be his moon; and, borrowing all her light from Him, should yet reflect it faithfully upon the world. And so she is, and does. Through the ages past, she has been filling her shining horn, and pouring more and more spiritual light upon the earth.

So, individual Christians should be stars. Each should receive and reflect an amount of spiritual light proportioned to his position and capacity. "As one star differeth from another star, in glory," so they may differ, in the volume and intensity of the light which they throw upon society; but all should be bright, all shining.

Analogously, wicked men might be termed comets, wandering stars; out of place in nature,

wild, erratic, whose baleful light is full of pestilence and war, and to whom will be reserved, if they continue in their present course and state, "the blackness of darkness forever."

Let us unitedly pray that the Sun of Righteousness may soon arise, with healing in his wings, and dissipate the pestilential darkness of sin, and illumine the Church with tenfold glory, and make every Christian radiant with spiritual light and life; so shall sinners be converted to God, the Church accomplish her mission, and the world be redeemed.



## XXII.

### TREASURES FOR ETERNITY.

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” — 1 COR. iii. 11-15.

THAN this, it seems to us there is no plainer, more practical, or fuller text, in the New Testament Scriptures. It touches the very essence of the Christian life, and is at once encouraging and warning; and the encouragement is soft and earnest, as the warning is gentle and tender; yet underneath the softness and gentleness, there lie springs of untold and unmeasured power. If we mistake not, there is in human nature a principle of perverseness, which renders it more susceptible to the influence of moderate than of extreme motives; especially when the motives are moral, and the good or evil in which they originate is remote from the present. In other words, men are more easily moved to prevent moderate losses than utter ruin. The milder apprehension seems to operate as a stimulus; the more deadly one as a paralysis. Tell a wealthy man that he is in danger of losing

a few hundreds or thousands, and the effect will be to rouse him to intelligent effort; but assure him that his whole fortune is imperilled, and in the greater number of instances he will sit down in stupid despondency. The force of this principle in spiritual things is indefinitely increased. The conviction that one is in danger of losing some part of heaven's good, will affect him more powerfully than the feeling that he may lose heaven itself.

“The fiend that man harries is love of the best.”

He will do more to climb to his ideal pinnacle, than to save himself from falling utterly. It is to this property of our common humanity, that the Apostle appeals in the text. We think his meaning will be more readily and distinctly apprehended, with the help of an illustrative comparison.

Let it be supposed that we had all heard of a beautiful and attractive foreign land, to which we were desirous of emigrating, after a limited period spent in preparation for what we expected and intended should be a life-long residence there; that the preparation consisted in an accumulation of capital for the supply of our prospective wants, and that we were well assured that the only possessions which would constitute wealth in the country whither we were going, were silver, gold, and precious stones; and that notwithstanding this assurance, a considerable proportion of our number should spend the period allotted for preparation in accumulating large amounts of our own national currency, bonds, stocks, and evidences of private credit; in the very

face of the information, reliably conveyed to them, that all these things would be worthless where they were going; and that they could never return, or sell, or exchange, or hope to derive from them any the least benefit or advantage whatever. Then we might reasonably look for some such results as these:—

We may suppose the farewells uttered, the shores of our birth-land faded forever from our sight, the perils of the stormy passage safely over, and our bark at anchor in that Harbor of whose beauty we had distantly heard and faintly imagined, but whose reality steps every sense in the delicious intoxication of its overwhelming loveliness; that everywhere we see evidences of a new and higher civilization than had brightened even the fairy-land of our dreams; that not only is nature clad with perennial beauty and bloom, and sheds hourly her glorious affluence all around; but the arts and appliances of civilized life so combine comfort, convenience, and elegance, that on every feature of earth and sky there might be written that climax of all descriptive words—Perfection. Now then, we may begin to see the effects of former industry and thrift. The wealthy man, calmly conscious of his superior resources, takes precedence of all in the passage to the shore; and there, as coffer after coffer of solid silver, and beaten gold, and gleaming gems, is thrown open to the gaze of all (for there are no thieves in that land and no need of locks and bars and guards); as the sunbeams are thrown back from this rich mass of treas-

ure, with dazzling radiance, upon the eyes of the crowding gazers, the fortunate possessor of all this wealth begins to realize the value of his former acquisitions. The people press to wait upon him. They are eager to do him service. He is escorted to a princely home, and entertained with splendid hospitality. When ready to make his choice, he selects for his permanent residence one of the most magnificent mansions in all the land ; fills it with comfort and luxury, and adorns it with elegance and beauty. He is visited and welcomed by the magnates of the state. Even Royalty, itself, condescends to smile upon the man who comes to it thus laden with treasures. His influence and countenance are sought. His coöperation is solicited in the furtherance of the grand schemes of the government. A sphere of extended and permanent usefulness opens before him ; and there, with all that can make life honorable and home happy, he dwells in peace.

So, too, the man who has secured but a competence — a little silver, a little gold, a few gems, enough to raise him above want and make him independent — conveys his modest box to the shore, and displays it with the comforting thought that, at least, he has something to begin life with in this foreign land : albeit he may feel one pang — not of envy but regret — as he witnesses the reception of his wealthy fellow-passenger, that he had not more diligently and earnestly labored when the opportunity of accumulation was in his power. Still, his competence insures to him the consideration

and respect of people of his own rank. He is welcomed. He is able to purchase a comfortable home, and to commence life in this new country with a solid basis for future exertions, and something like a reasonable prospect of ultimate wealth; though he can never hope to overtake those who start with more capital than he; for here there are no vicissitudes of fortune; and all success depends simply upon the amount which one invests at starting.

But what of him who has spent his time, before coming to this place, in accumulating greenbacks, bonds, stocks, notes, and accounts? He finds, when the officers come aboard and he displays his treasure, that it is all worthless. Indeed, he was sufficiently apprised of this before; but he chose to be self-deceived, and would not believe that what procured him consideration and respect in his own country, could be utterly without value anywhere. Now, when it is too late to repair it, he discovers his mistake. He has not one cent in the world of current coin, and is obliged to the charity of a good-natured boatman for a cast ashore. He carries his bundles of trash with him, hoping for better fortune there; but when he again displays his treasure, to the crowd upon the shore, they all smile and shake their heads. They are not disposed to sneer; but they unite in assuring him that his whole fortune will not suffice to purchase him a night's lodging, or a single meal, in their country. Convinced at last, he flings aside the worthless rubbish whose acquisition cost him so much toil.

and self-denial, and sets out to wander inland. It is true that he cannot absolutely suffer here; that the climate is so genial and nature so munificent as to relieve him from the apprehension of actual want for the necessaries of life; but a homeless, houseless wanderer, the victim of his own sad error, he must rebuild from the ground, if he can, the edifice of his fallen fortunes.

The fair foreign land, of which we have heard, and whither we expect to go, after a few years spent in preparation here, is Heaven. We have obtained, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who purchased it for us at a most costly rate, the right to go; a sure title of conveyance thither and admittance there. We may lose it; we may sell it; we may give it away; we may throw it away; we may alienate it as we will; but while we keep it, it is good, and will be found current when the time of our departure shall come. But to retain it, requires diligence, pains, and care. It is valuable, and there are thieves who would steal it, and knaves who would gladly defraud us of it; and there is one grand and crafty Magician who cries evermore in the streets of our earthly house, "*New lamps for old!*" hoping thus by indirection and the glittering display of false wares, to gain possession of that prize which he cannot wrest from us by open force. But in spite of all we may keep it, if we will use sufficient care and watchfulness.

And in the mean time, our business here is to lay up in store for the world to come. We have explicit and positive information regarding the cur-

rency of our future Home. It consists exclusively, we are assured, of silver, gold, and precious stones; but the silver is not of earth; the gold not that which we dig from the mine; the gems not those won from the land or deep. The silver is the pure white purpose of a life consecrated to God; which is repentance. The gold is the warm, bright, glad trust of the heart, which takes hold upon the sacrifice of Christ and stands all the fires of affliction, without losing anything save its earthly dross; which is faith. The gems are deeds of Christian love and holy charity. These are the only treasures which will endure and pass current in Heaven; and to accumulate these, is our sole errand and object in the present life. But the world is full of other treasures, which are counted gain by all who are of the World's party; while in the Celestial Country, they are reckoned "wood, hay, stubble." Earthly wealth, the most substantial of all these treasures, is denominated "wood;" it is valuable for many purposes here; it may even be exchanged for the true riches here; but it is utterly worthless in the region beyond; it cannot endure those fires of Divine justice and holiness through which all our treasures must pass. Worldly honor, a less substantial affair, is termed "hay;" the grass of the earth's fields, mown with the sword, dried in the battle-glare, and, with the red dew of life upon it, bound about the brows of the world's heroes, and fancifully named the "laurel wreath;" albeit, it may be worthily won and worn, and aid its possessor in the accumulation of

real treasure—it is yet light, combustible, and frail, and will perish at the first breath of that fiery test which it must pass. Worldly pleasure, an utterly worthless and noxious thing, is named “stubble;” the refuse of the Christian harvest-man; to be burned up or trodden down and buried out of sight, before the field can be made ready for the seed of life. Such are the competitors of the true riches. And alas for their success! A large proportion of even the Christian world are spending the precious hours allotted them to prepare for heaven, in grazing over the barren stubble fields of worldly pleasure. Another large proportion are striving for worldly distinction; while a number so great as almost to desolate the altars of God’s house are straining every energy to gain the world’s wealth; and these all fondly imagine that their material and temporal accumulations will stand the fiery scrutiny of God!

But the time of our departure is at hand. The sails of the ghostly ship which must bear us hence are gleaming, even now, through the deepening twilight of our declining lives. A little while, and our last farewell to the scenes and homes and friends we have loved on earth, will have been spoken. We shall be on board the death-craft; and the lights and shadows of this fair world will be fading from our sight. Then a brief, or more probably a lingering, passage across the dark and stormy flood (for it is seldom the wind blows fair on that grim sea), and we shall anchor in the harbor of the heavenly Canaan. O then, what scenes



of transcendent loveliness will greet our eyes ! How the richest visions of genius will be beggared by that divine reality ! Then the very Inspiration of sculpture, picture, poesy, and music shall be married to Immortality, and beget myriad forms of beauty and harmony and glory ! And how our souls shall drink in delight, as the pure waters of the River of God ! And there and then will be seen the effect of our earthly accumulations. There will be displayed the treasures of the soul. Then the man who has perfected repentance in the fear of God, perfected faith in holiness, perfected love in deeds of loving-kindness, will find that he has in abundance, the silver, the gold, and the diamonds of Heaven. Then the silver of repentance, passing through death's fires, shall yield its latest alloy, and appear a throne of pure white light, inscribed by a Divine hand with the words, "EARTHLY CONSECRATION APPROVED IN HEAVEN." Then the gold of faith shall be placed in the crucible of Divine holiness, and tried by the fires of Divine justice ; and thence shall be wrought, by the hands of Heaven's artificers, a crown of glory whose frontlet again shall be Divinely inscribed, "EARTHLY HOLINESS APPROVED IN HEAVEN." Then the jewels of Christian love shall be weighed in the balances of the skies, and tested by the eye of God, and wrought into innumerable stars of glory ; and these shall deck the crown of glory of the man who is rich towards God ; and thus throned on Consecration, and crowned with a golden Faith, and gemmed and

starred with deeds of holy Charity, he shall take his place among the hierarchy of Heaven.

And so the man who labored on earth with moderate zeal and success to accumulate heavenly treasure, will receive a proportionably less reward. What silver he has will be tried, weighed, and reckoned to his credit. It may be small in quantity, but it will be the beginning of his future throne of Consecration; for throughout eternity he will continually add to it, as indeed will all. What gold he has obtained will be beaten into a crown; and its name shall be "*Holiness*;" though poor and small, compared with his who went before. The gems which he has secured, will adorn the crown; albeit they may be few and their lustre dim, beside his who was at once more able, more faithful, and more diligent on earth. And he, as he notes the contrast, may feel one pang — not of envy but regret — that he had not more earnestly labored to lay up treasures in Heaven.

But what of the man who has committed the foolish error of supposing, against the express assurance of God, that earthly treasures — wealth, honor, pleasure — would endure the test of Divine scrutiny and pass current in Heaven? He reaches Heaven with no more repentance, faith, or love than when he first set out to go there; with his original title, and no more; with none of the silver, gold, or jewels which he might have gained. True, he was rich in this world's goods; and he could not bring himself to believe that these were quite worthless in the sight of God. They pro-

cured him consideration and respect here, to the last moment of his life. His friends surrounded him with every testimonial of esteem and tenderness, when he bade them farewell. Alas! how could he think that they waited only to seize upon the fortune which he left behind? Nay, he heard from one who came a little later on, that his church mourned him after he had departed; that it was draped with solemn sables; that he had a splendid funeral and an immense following, when his body was borne to the grave; that a good-natured minister pronounced a eulogy on his virtues, and published an obituary notice of his life and character, abounding in terms of extravagant praise; and that his family erected a costly marble to his memory. Alas! how could he suppose that the church was as worldly as himself? that the minister was time-serving or weak? and that his family more memorized their own pride and vanity than his virtues? And now, he dares the fiery scrutiny of God and angels, with "wood, hay, stubble," for his sole treasure and dependence. They are instantly consumed; and he, "as by fire," stripped of all his false securities, naked, scorched, destitute, steps at length upon the shores of heaven. Alas! poor, desolate, forlorn, regretful waif of humanity, snatched by the hands of Angelic Charity from a fiery doom! He does indeed "*suffer loss.*" He passes at once from the highest place on earth to the lowest place in Heaven; and must begin to seek, there, for the silver, the gold, and the jewels which he now values at their real worth, but

which on earth, and under the humble names of Repentance, Faith, and Love, he scorned and neglected for things which perish in the using.

The shaft which pierces to the mine, where sleeps the silver of the skies, awaiting our earnest hands to pluck it forth, is in our closets. There, with serious self-examination, mighty wrestling, and strong cries of the Soul, may we perfect repentance in the fear of God, and realize the pure and silvery brightness of a Christian consecration. The gold of faith lies, in many-veined richness, in our ecclesiastical relations. If we gather it, it will make us rich towards God. If we neglect it, though rich in this world, we shall go poverty-stricken to Heaven, if indeed we go there at all. But the jewels of that bright land are found in most unlikely, most unseemly places; in the homes of the poor; in the cells of the condemned; by the bedsides of the sick; where Widowhood and Orphanage weep in silence, darkness, and destitution,— there they shine, and wait our coming to possess them. All the tears which we wipe away from the eyes of Suffering, in this world, are caught by the hands of viewless angels, and turn to the diamonds of the skies.

### XXIII.

#### “LOVE OF THE TRUTH” NECESSARY TO SALVATION.

“Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” — 2 THESS. ii. 10-12.

FROM this striking passage of Scripture, we learn, first, that the only possible means of salvation to lost men is “the love of the truth.” With this “love of the truth,” therefore, God, who “will have all men to be saved,” engages, through the Atonement, to provide every rational soul; and the provision is accordingly made, through what is termed “the preventing grace of Christ.” This grace, or favor, as the terms imply, comes before all choice or agency on the part of man, and quickens his otherwise dead heart and conscience, to see the truth, and love it. That this is fact, and not fancy, is evident to all who have observed, attentively and thoughtfully, the dispositions of childhood. There is nothing of which it is more impatient than deception. It can with difficulty forgive the father or the mother who deceives it. Its intelligence is the pure crystal window which God hath set in the framework of

its soul, that all its chambers may be radiant with the light of truth; and whenever the glass is dimmed with the murky breath of falsehood, the impatient tenant utters its cry of natural remonstrance. And this strong "love of the truth" continues almost always through later childhood up to youth. The treasure with which God has endued the soul, He guards and keeps in its possession, till its spiritual majority is passed, and it is competent to keep its own possessions. Thenceforward, it can and does do, with its spiritual treasures, just what it freely wills. Sometimes it conserves and increases them: more frequently, it wastes, barter, and partly or wholly alienates them. And in all this there is no fatality, any more than when a father divides his fortune between his children, of whom one may keep and increase his capital, and another diminish or altogether squander it. The father did not, in any degree, influence this differing result, and is in no sense responsible for it. On the contrary, if a good and wise man, all the influence which he could exert was designed and calculated to produce the same conservative effect in both instances. He impressed on both his sons the same lessons of economy. He displayed to them both the same example of industry and frugality. Then, when he launched them on life, one sank and the other rose: each, as he freely chose.

We said this "love of the truth," with which God endues every soul, is the only means of salvation to that soul. Nothing can be plainer. God

has provided a free salvation for all men, through the voluntary reception of a system of truth; and He provided for their salvation in no other way. The key to that system is the Atonement. Pilate's question was already answered, in the words, "I am the truth." But Pilate had not received "the love of the truth;" and, therefore, did not recognize it, when he saw it embodied before him. Every unbeliever is a new Pilate; who, with Truth before him, in the meek form of the Son of God, stands dreamily inquiring, "What is truth?" And then delivers Truth to be scourged and crucified. But Pilate did not wholly reject Christ. He said, "He is innocent." He said, "He is a just man." He said, "What evil hath He done?" But still, with the soft murmur "What is truth?" on his lips, he rejected Truth. And so, the Pilates of to-day can praise the plan of salvation; can see beauty, grandeur, sublimity in it; while in heart and life they turn away from "the truth," and murmur with all philosophical sentimentality, "What is truth?" Thus doing, their salvation is one plain, simple, utter, and eternal impossibility. Rejecting "the love of the truth," they throw away the only power by which truth can be apprehended. The totally blind may seek as well and hopefully for the light, as he who rejects "the love of the truth," for the truth. His soul is a completely darkened room; wherein Thought, and Conscience, and Will wander blindly, and stumble helplessly, and sometimes contend wildly, until one or other is throttled and dead; while all the

time they have but to open the shutter of prejudice, and let in the light of which the outer world is full, in order to discern their loving relation to each other, and the tenderness of Him who shines upon them in every ray of Truth. That gloomy and unhappy soul, full of doubt and stumbling and conflict, is the mansion of every impenitent man's unrest. There, in sad and direful confusion, dwell his spiritual forces. And so long as he receives not "the love of the truth," so long must he abide in darkness.

"For this cause," because he receives not "the love of the truth," God hath sent him strong delusion. Truth, like a great sun, illumines the spiritual world; but not all choose to dwell in its light. Some will build them houses of error, palaces of sin, whence the day must be shut out, and where sparkle and gleam but counterfeit brilliances, whose deceitful radiance blends all the nicer colors of virtue and vice; and where all is riot, revel, and debauch. God is not responsible, if men will have it so. He made them free; and He gave them the day of truth; if they prefer the darkness of sin and the false lights of error, it is because they have deliberately educated themselves to the evil preference. He gave them "the love of the truth;" if they choose to part with it, either little by little, or in one great barter with the cheating devil, they are free to do so, but their doing so leads directly and certainly to their "damnation;" and of this they are warned beforehand; so that they may be left without excuse, in the great day



of judgment. If they do not suspect their danger nor apprehend their doom, it is their own fault and folly; it is because they will not. They have been told of it often enough. They have been warned with sufficient frequency and fervor. God has warned them; man has warned them; their own consciences warned them; and they have sinned against, and silenced all. In the heated ball-room, in the crowded theatre, in the drinking saloon, in the gambling hell, in the brothel, what think they of the near and horrid death? And yet, have they not been warned? So those who clasp to their souls a "strong delusion," though they may be unconscious, now, that it is a delusion; though they may call it the very truth; yet once they knew better; and they are deceived now, because they wish to be deceived. And this self-deception, this "delusion," is in order to their present and ultimate "damnation." It is the direct road to it, and the universe has no other. Let them leave it for a day; and there is one day's pause in their progress toward Hell. Let them even doubt of it for a moment; and there is a moment's lull in the wild whirr of the wheels of life, rushing down sin's dark grade to perdition. It is the only means for their destruction: Hell has no other,—is bankrupt, if deprived of this; for no man is going there with his eyes open. It were as easy to suppose that he would walk deliberately into the consuming flames of a heated furnace. True, there have been men who walked to such fiery death with seeming deliberateness; but

they were first maddened by intoxicating drugs and potions. And so these sinful men are drunk with the strong delusion which they have greedily swallowed, and perceive not the doom to which they hasten. They "believe a lie," in order that they may "be damned," who believe "not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness."

The "lie" has many forms; is put up in packages and administered in doses, to suit customers; it is the same essential lie; and its essence is, that a man may practically reject Christ, who is the Truth — or, at the least, indefinitely postpone accepting Him, and escape damnation. This is the alternative of all saving truth; the darkness which follows instantly when the light of "the love of truth" is extinguished in any soul. The man *must* believe the one thing or the other; the truth, or the lie. If he believe the truth, he will be saved; if he believe the lie, he must be damned. And, having once swallowed the lie, "there is but one antidote in the world which can prevent its deadly effects; which can keep him out of Hell; and, lest he should fail to use it, the "Physician of souls" has placed that only and perfect remedy in his own hands. It consists of a candid experiment of the efficacy of evangelical truth on his own heart and life; and is best described in those words of Christ, "If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine." This is simply candid and fair. If I am dying, and one offers to me what he claims is the elixir of life, can I refuse to analyze and to test? espe-

cially when my best and dearest friends assure me that they have tried it with the happiest results? It is true, I *may* do so, and die; and only kindred fondness could regret my death. Thus God furnishes every man with the means of perfect certainty as to truth; but forces none to use it; while He warns all to neglect or postpone it at their immortal peril. Thence and thus, God is forever free from the imputation of any man's endless destruction. If he perish, he is an immortal suicide. He has stabbed, to eternal death, his own soul. Too indolent to "work out his own salvation," on the just and immutable terms of God, he has gone, like a midnight burglar, wrapped in his dark mantle of delusion, and broken into the house of Hell, seeking to steal the riches of Heaven; and, if the devils take him in the act, and make him prisoner forever, let him not blame the friends who warned him, the law which prohibited the deed, or the kindly Magistrate who sought to win him to the peaceful paths of spiritual industry.

We said the "lie" has many forms; the poison of Hell is arranged in packages to suit all comers. One is prepared expressly for fools. So gross and undisguised is the death which it bears, that no one with a grain of sense or reason can be induced to touch it. It is labeled, "Atheism." The "fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Another, more carefully arranged and wrapped, and covered with strange hieroglyphs, to make it look like science and learning, is labeled, in small letters, "*Infidelity*;" and in large, staring capitals,

"DEISM." This is eagerly sought by vain people, who covet a reputation for learning and smartness; but the real nature of the contents is known only to a few strong souls, who knew how to drink the whole draught, and lived in the long delirium of its intoxication; albeit, some of the bravest and strongest among them would have given worlds for an antidote, when, all too late, they came to die. Another package, prepared for more sensitive, delicate, and refined people, is marked "*Skepticism*," to be taken in broken doses, as an alterative, and continued indefinitely. Its effect is a species of spiritual coquetry, in which the soul toys and dallies with all the forms of Truth and Falsehood, alternately; and finally sinks, unwedded and unblessed, into the arms of some specious "lie," and makes her bed in Hell. Then come preparations for the multitude, in great number. One is labeled, "Inconsistencies of professors of religion;" and produces the strange delusion that the bad deeds of those who are members of the Church will excuse our own utter neglect of spiritual and immortal things. It is surprising, what a number of persons fancy this particular form of the great "lie." Perhaps it is the most popular of all the forms of error. Then, for more thoughtful and intellectual people, there is a parcel marked "Christian Inefficiency." The man who takes it votes Christianity a failure. It has failed in its mission. It has accomplished nothing. The world is growing worse year by year. And this because his own neighborhood, or

section, or country, is for the time demoralized. He cannot elevate himself to a position of thought which commands the whole Christian prospect; or he cannot see the truth, when it is before his eyes, because he has swallowed the "lie." But one of the most taking of all the forms of the delusion, is stamped, "Indefinite Postponement of the Whole Question." The wretched being who takes it can only utter, "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow." And so saying, he dies, and is damned; for the natural and necessary effect of the believed "lie," to him, as to all the others, is eternal perdition. They "believe a lie, that they may be damned."

The specific preparations which we have indicated are not the only current forms of that "strong delusion" which leads direct to Hell. On the contrary, they are multiform — indefinitely mixed and diversified. But all contain the deadly virus of the great "lie," and utterly poison, corrupt, and destroy that "love of the truth" which leads to salvation.

And now, O, my friends and neighbors! I bring you a message, warm from the heart of infinite Love, fresh from the pale lips of the bleeding Truth, and baptized with the deep urgency of the pleading Spirit; and the message is this: "Because ye received not the love of the truth, that ye might be saved; for this cause, God hath sent you strong delusion, that you should believe a lie: that ye all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness."

This is God's message to us, to-day. Let us not cavil at the words. Are they rough? Do they wound us? "Faithful are the wounds of a friend;" and God is yet enough our friend to try to save us, and He has taught his ministers to be enough our friends to try to save us. We should not, were we sleeping in a burning house, quarrel with our friend's blunt words, which roused us from our stupor, and urged us to exertion, while escape was possible? Then let us quarrel not with these plain words; let us start not at God's plain words. Only, let us awake, for our immortal life, and realize our danger, before it is too late! "The poison of asps is under our tongue." The spirit of uncandor and untruth has possessed us, and lurks in every form and feature of the "lie" by which we shield ourselves from instant "repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." He lies! he lies! The devil that besets and deceives us lies! He lies! for there is a God; and we cannot contend with Him, nor escape from Him. He lies! for God's Word is true. He lies! for the Truth stands, scourged and bleeding, before us, in the person of Jesus Christ. He lies! for there are holy men and women in the Church, whose pure lives are a sufficient answer to all cavils. He lies! for religion is a grand success; and is daily leavening the world; and the day is coming when the world's measure shall be full of its Divine and hal- lowing power. And, above all, he lies, when he tells us that we can continue to postpone salvation, and still be saved! for well he knows that to-mor-

row we may be in Hell ; and that some to-morrow will as certainly find us there, as we continue to postpone the time of our return to God. All our excuses and procrastinations are simply one devilish delusion and lie, in order to our damnation. And will we live and die the poor deluded dupes of a cheating devil ? Will we suffer him to pack us on a through train for Hell, swift as time, certain as death, and dark as the doom to which we hasten ? That "strong delusion," in which we are wrapped, is the coffin car of everlasting night ; the black hearse of the souls that haste to immortal graves. Leap from the platform ! leap from the windows ! leap for your lives ! for I tell you now, as man to man, as soul to soul, and as we shall front each other at the judgment seat of Christ, the only hope for you and me is in one wild spring, that shall wrench us away from that delusion, and commit us to God.

## XXIV.

### FAITHFULNESS TO CHRIST.

“Be thou faithful unto death.” — REV. ii. 10.

ANCIENT Smyrna was one of the finest cities in all the Levant, on account of its wealth, commerce, and the number of its refined and cultivated citizens. It is now wasted and destroyed; but, about three miles from modern Smyrna, on the elevated plain now occupied and almost covered by extensive cemeteries, the traveller is pointed to some ruinous remains of its ancient site.

But what gives it a strong claim upon the interest of the Christian, is the fact that it was the seat of one of the seven apocalyptic churches of Asia, and the one, especially, to whose pastor and members was directed the Epistle of which the text forms a part. Its pastor and bishop was the celebrated Polycarp, the human link between the church of the apostles and the church of the second century; the pupil and friend of the beloved John; who often took delight in describing, to his people and children, the very appearance, countenance, form, gestures, and voice of that holy Apostle. In these descriptions, he pointed to the seat which St. John formerly occupied (which was sacredly preserved), and by his tender and affectionate elo-



quence brought again the dead Apostle, in living seeming before their weeping eyes. It was to this man, as the angel of the church at Smyrna, that these words, "Be thou faithful unto death," were particularly addressed. And truly, they had to him an awful significance; for he was a martyr to his fidelity to Christ. And when, at the last moment, before the flames which were to consume him were kindled, the proconsul, struck with his holy and reverend appearance, and desirous to save his life, implored him to escape the torture by blaspheming the name of Christ, his reply is historic, and will always be grand: "Eighty and six years have I served Him; and He has never done me wrong. How, then, can I blaspheme my Lord, who has saved me?" He resisted unto blood. He was "faithful unto death."

The thought in the text is not merely a thought, fossilized in words, and cold, and hard, and dry: it is surrounded by a subtile and vital aroma, like the sweet odor of a flower which penetrates the senses and woos our approach to gaze upon its beauty, to handle and pluck it, if we will, and place it in the heart's ruddy urn; where it may bloom forever, filling the apartment of our lives with fragrance and gladness. Thus it woos us to-day; and thus gently and sweetly led, do we approach and look upon this beautiful theme: "Christian Fidelity."

We have here a duty. Let us consider it: "Be thou faithful unto death." In this case, fidelity is, of course, subjective in the Christian, and finds its

object in Christ: "Be thou faithful unto death, to Me." Christian fidelity is fidelity to Christ. Fidelity to Christ is fidelity to the principles of Christ; and these will be found, upon the last analysis, to consist of two, truth and love. Truth, again, exists in two great forms, purity and honesty. Purity is subjective — honesty objective. Purity relates to character — honesty to conduct. Purity is simple, whole, cannot be grasped and analyzed — honesty is tangible, overt, easily classified, arranged, understood. Purity is the principle — honesty the product. Purity, in the abstract, we cannot conceive. It is above us. It is beyond us. It is Divine. It is of the essence of God. It is, like Himself, unknown, absolute, infinite. We name it, we revere it, we cannot know it. We make white an emblem of purity; because we can only conceive of purity in the concrete. We say, "pure as the snow:" the thought cannot go further: it cannot reach the simple abstraction. And if it could; if we might, in thought, separate from the snow-flake hardness, coldness, form, and color — all those properties by which it arrests our attention — we should then have an abstraction, not of purity, but of a snow-flake. We repeat, and emphasize, purity, in its essence, eludes us: we cannot grasp it. It is too fine, subtile, and ethereal for the touch of spirits confined in the coarse barriers of sense.

Of moral purity we attempt a kind of definition, when we term it innocence — freedom from guilt and sin; but this is merely negative and defective

purity. We say innocent as a child, and think we have said a great deal — almost all that can be said when we typify innocence with childhood; but the child has vicious and unholy tempers, and is far from being absolutely even innocent. But the purity of virtue — of perfect virtue — is something far higher; something of which we cannot conceive; save as it is revealed to us, personified, in the life of Him who was, at once, the Son of Man and the Son of God. In attempting to obtain even a faint glimpse of the purity of this matchless Character, the saintliest human soul should put off its shoes from off its feet, as feeling that it stands upon holy ground; for such a view can only be obtained by looking into the very heart of Christ; a human heart, it is true, but shrined in Divinity, guarded by a God. Here, the intolerable Glory pains and blinds even the eagle eye of intellect — we can only see by glimpses. Here we behold every human and sensual appetite, propensity, and passion, in all their native force, held in leash, like tamed tigers, led harmless and innocuous, by the hand of perfect Virtue. This is all that we can see and know of the purity of Christ. For its celestial sources — the fountains whence the “golden bowl” of his being was filled, perpetually, with this Divine effluence, they lie too remote for the ken of any earthly spirit: they flow from the everlasting hills of Glory.

To be faithful to the purity of Christ, is to study it and imitate it as closely as possible; to seek,

always, to be pure as he was pure, on earth ; to seek, constantly, spiritual perfection ; to “ follow holiness,” without which none of us shall see Him as He is, and finally be like Him. I do not bid you to profess purity, holiness, perfection — O no. *He* did not do that, and you need not. You may safely follow his example here, as in all things ; and while you seek perfect purity, with all your heart, never boast, to the world, that you have found it ; for, if you do, the world will not believe you ; and you will thus bring reproach upon the purity of your Master.

Forth from this fountain of purity, in the soul of Christ, issued all the crystal streams of his peerless honesty. These broke from his heart, and flowed into his life, through three great gates ; the gate of pantomime, the gate of speech, and the gate of action. Through the gate of pantomime ; all his smiles were Virtue’s own — all his frowns were the meed of Vice. He knew nothing of the sycophant’s grin : He was a stranger to the contagion of popular reprobation. He had a hearty contempt, as every true man has, for the popular verdict, because it is commonly wrong. This contempt He did not take the pains to hide. When Jerusalem would welcome Him with hosannas, and crown Him King, He gave them the withering rebuke of riding meekly and humbly upon an ass. From a thousand matchless steeds, and gilded chariots, which were doubtless offered Him, on that day, He turned meekly to “ a colt, the foal of an ass.” In all his life, nor eye, nor feature,

nor expression, nor gesture, was ever untrue to truth. Yet, within these limits, there must have lain an unexampled power of expression. He must have had the most mobile face that God ever cast in a human mould. From the calm majesty which slept, like a Divine seal, upon all his features, in repose, we may imagine them breaking into innumerable expressions of tenderness, or rebuke, according to the variously diversified characters of the men, women, and children whom He met, and whom he read at a glance, to the heart's core. Of the unequalled power of these expressions, we can form but a faint conception. The single look which broke the heart of his apostate disciple, and sent him out to spend the night in bitter weeping, and his whole after life in faithful service of that Lord whom then he was abjuring and cursing, may be taken as significant, in part, of the wondrous truth and power of the looks and gestures of Christ.

Fidelity to Christ is following Christ's example, and wearing an honest face and mien: having no politic smiles for the unworthy, and no frowning or contemptuous indifference for the unfortunate.

Through the gate of Christ's speech, flowed another pearly stream of truth. His words were revelations of truth: He was the true "Teacher come from God." His words were living testimonies to the truth: He was "the faithful and true Witness." His words had the simplicity of truth: there was nothing artful in his speech: He spoke in language that a little child might understand.

His words had the dignity of truth: there was no impassioned advocacy of creeds — no wild and fervid declamation on his lips — no burning appeals to fiery passions in the hearts of his hearers. His words had all the directness of truth: there was no craftiness of speech in Him, even when dealing with his mortal enemies: He still “only spoke right on.” His words had all the boldness of truth: He never kept it back through fear of producing dissatisfaction, opposition, enmity in his hearers. There was no cowardly suppression, or glossing over of the truth, because it was unpopular. He did not mince his words, and so shear them of their force. He called the Pharisees what they were, “hypocrites” and “vipers,” and denounced against them “the damnation of hell.” These were the unworthy rich and great. He did not scruple to denounce them; but He stooped, with the tenderness of a Divine compassion, and his voice was gentler than a woman’s, when He spoke to penitent sinners, though publicans and harlots were of the number. He spoke the truth, as no other man ever spoke it.

Would you be faithful to Christ, follow his example here. Absolve your soul from the cowardly conventionalities of life, and dare to utter the honest thought that is in it, without stopping to inquire what influence the utterance may have on your own fortune, or on the good or ill opinion of others concerning you.

Through the diamond gate of action, flowed the purity of Christ, and crystalized in honest deeds;

Heaven's gift of jewels to the bride of its princely Son ; which she shall wear upon her brow, and neck, and bosom evermore, — until the day — the bridal morning of the universe — when the royal Bridegroom shall lead her, in triumph and glory, to his Father's throne. Jesus Christ was an honest Man, in a higher sense than the poet ever fained when he said, —

“An honest man 's the noblest work of God ;”

for He was faultlessly and immaculately honest : without error as without sin. He was honest as a laboring man ; meeting all his filial obligations to industry, and toiling patiently at his reputed father's trade, and for the benefit of his parents, until He was thirty years of age ; a long minority and a late majority, the fast children of this age will say ; and an example which they would not care to imitate. Then, when He took up his great task, as a public Teacher, He entered upon it in the same spirit. He forsook father and mother, home and friends, and devoted Himself to that one work with calm and unremitting energy. He forgot hunger and thirst. He said, “It is my meat and drink, to do the will of Him that sent Me.” He rebuked all shams, stripped them of their specious disguises, and held them up, in naked and native hideousness, to the reprobation of all honest souls. With the scorn of a God upon his lip and eye, and the might of a giant in his hand, He scourged from the temple of his Father, the vile and polluting hordes that had long defiled it under the sanction of a corrupt and venal priesthood. He was the fearless

Friend and advocate of the poor, the down-trodden, and the oppressed. He set a little child above the doctors of the law and his own ambitious disciples, and bade them learn of him, and be like him, on pain of never entering the Kingdom of God. He stood in the festal throng, and drank of the festal cup, in lofty scorn of all shallow and hypocritical asceticism. He brought upon Himself, with fearless indifference, the charge of gluttony and wine-bibbing. He never seemed or feigned; He always lived and was. Such a true life, in such a false world, could not be popular. It made Him enemies; who hated, maligned, and persecuted Him unto death. Wouldst thou be faithful to Christ? Go, thou, and do likewise. Love the truth, and do it; love the right and espouse it. Hate the wrong and condemn it, and oppose it; though it be wealthier and greater and mightier than thou; though it overcome and destroy thee; let thy last utterance and thy death be the sign and token of the truth, "Be thou faithful unto death" to the truth of Christ.

We said fidelity to Christ is fidelity to the principles of Christ. We said the principles of Christ are two, truth and love. We have noticed the first; let us consider the last. Love, like truth, exists in two great forms, benevolence and beneficence; or, according to the etymology of the terms, good-willing and good-doing. Benevolence, again, is subjective — beneficence, objective. Benevolence is the abstract — beneficence, the concrete of love. Benevolence is simple; its essence, inscrutable; its



sources hidden. Like purity, it is of the essence of God; and we cannot know it. All true love, — all love worthy of the name, — all which is not instinctive and brutal — in its last analysis, is benevolence. All in parental, in filial, in conjugal, in fraternal affection, that is worthy and immortal, may be reduced to benevolence. We wonder that a mother clings to an unnatural child — a wife to an unworthy husband. How shallow! The more utter the unworthiness, the finer the play and the grander the energies of this ethereal and heavenly benevolence. With regard to this principle, there are two grand epochs in the earthly life of man; the first is his birth; when, dipping his finger in the chalice of the skies, the angel of his soul lets fall a single drop of this Divine Essence into his heart, which flows out into all those channels which we term the natural affections; the second is his new birth, or conversion to God, or heavenly baptism; when the Holy Spirit takes Himself the office, from the hands of the ministering angel, and pours into the soul the abundant sources of a universal benevolence. It is through this fine medium — the prism of the skies — that that soul looks out upon a new world of beauty and bloom and gladness. Hence flow his tears of happiness; hence glow his brow and cheek and lip; hence break his shouts of rejoicing. The heavy tide of natural and even animal life is stirred by this heavenly elixir, which is poured into his heart from the hand of God, and breaks into a thousand ebullitions of gentle or passionate joy. Of course, we understand,

these Divine gifts, no more than those of the purely intellectual or physical powers, are inalienable. Man is the sovereign receiver and controller of all the gifts of God. If he will, he may paralyze, by vicious excesses, all his physical powers; if he will he may waste and shrivel and wreck his intellect; and so, if he will, he may dilute, adulterate, and poison the fountains of benevolence which God opens in his soul. We see this illustrated every day — how an education and life of fashionable frivolity may poison the sources of natural affection, until the mother shall forget and cruelly neglect her own child; and how the once warm convert to the love of Christ may grow lukewarm, and cold, and selfish, and even vile.

Of the degree and quality of these benevolent endowments, there is an indefinite variety in human nature, which accords with all the analogies of life; but nowhere, again, save in the character of Christ, do we behold it in the fullness of perfection. Christ was the human and tangible expression of his Father's love. "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ was God's love voicing itself in humanity. Christ was the caress of Heaven to Earth; the kiss of the Divine Father to the prodigal, but penitent and returning World. Christ was Divine Love in human form and seeming. Talk about analyzing and understanding it! The very angels blindly and wonderingly envy it! The princely intelligences of Glory, ripened for untold

ages in the very atmosphere of infinite Truth and Love, desire, in vain, to look into it. We can only helplessly repeat, — as if repetition might aggravate our conception of the inconceivable, — Christ was a personified Benevolence.

Would we be faithful to the Love of Christ? let us study, in Him, and cultivate in our own hearts the principle of benevolence. Let us aim, always, at perfect benevolence. Let us strive for it with all our ransomed powers. But again, we say, let us never boast, to the world, that we have obtained it; that we are made perfect in love; for *He* did not do that; and we need not; and the world will not believe us, if we do; and we shall thus bring reproach upon the love of Christ.

Forth, again, from these infinite sources, in the heart of Christ, flowed, in three grand streams, the beneficence of Christ; beneficence to the bodies, to the minds, and to the souls of men. To their bodies: He fed the famishing multitudes; He filled, with luxury, the cup of their social enjoyments. He healed their diseases; gave sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, ears to the deaf, and feet to the lame. He raised their dead, from the bed, from the bier and from the grave, and restored them, living, to their embraces. He taught the giving of secret alms; by which the charities of the kind-hearted were diverted from those public and ostentatious channels by which they are mulcted of their chief value, or loaded with those humiliations by which they are rendered bitter and degrading to the souls of the poor. By this one act, it were

easy to show, He more than doubled the revenues of the poor to the end of the world, in every country whither his religion comes. And if, by this one act, He doubled them, by his precepts of universal kindness and brotherhood He multiplied that product a hundred fold. True, He was not rich, and He left no princely moneyed charity to do Him honor ; no grand eleemosynary foundation to reverence his name and sound his praises after He was dead ; but He laid in human hearts the deep foundations of every charitable edifice that salutes the skies to-day, or that ever will be reared on this earth.

Would you be faithful to the Love of Christ, follow his example here ; and while you give, of your poverty or abundance, all that you can spare to the suffering poor, seek also to inspire your children, your friends, all with whom you have influence, with principles of the largest beneficence.

Another stream of beneficence flowed from the heart of Christ to the minds of men. "He taught them as One having authority," the authority of perfect knowledge and wisdom. Astonished by his wisdom, well might his contemporaries say, "Never man spake like this Man." He taught them the principles of a higher and grander civilization than the world had ever dreamed of before ; — a civilization of love — a communism of affection. His Gospel was the Gospel of peace. It was with the hammer of the truths He taught, and on the anvil of the ages, that the swart soul-smith who toils in the brain-shop was to beat all "swords

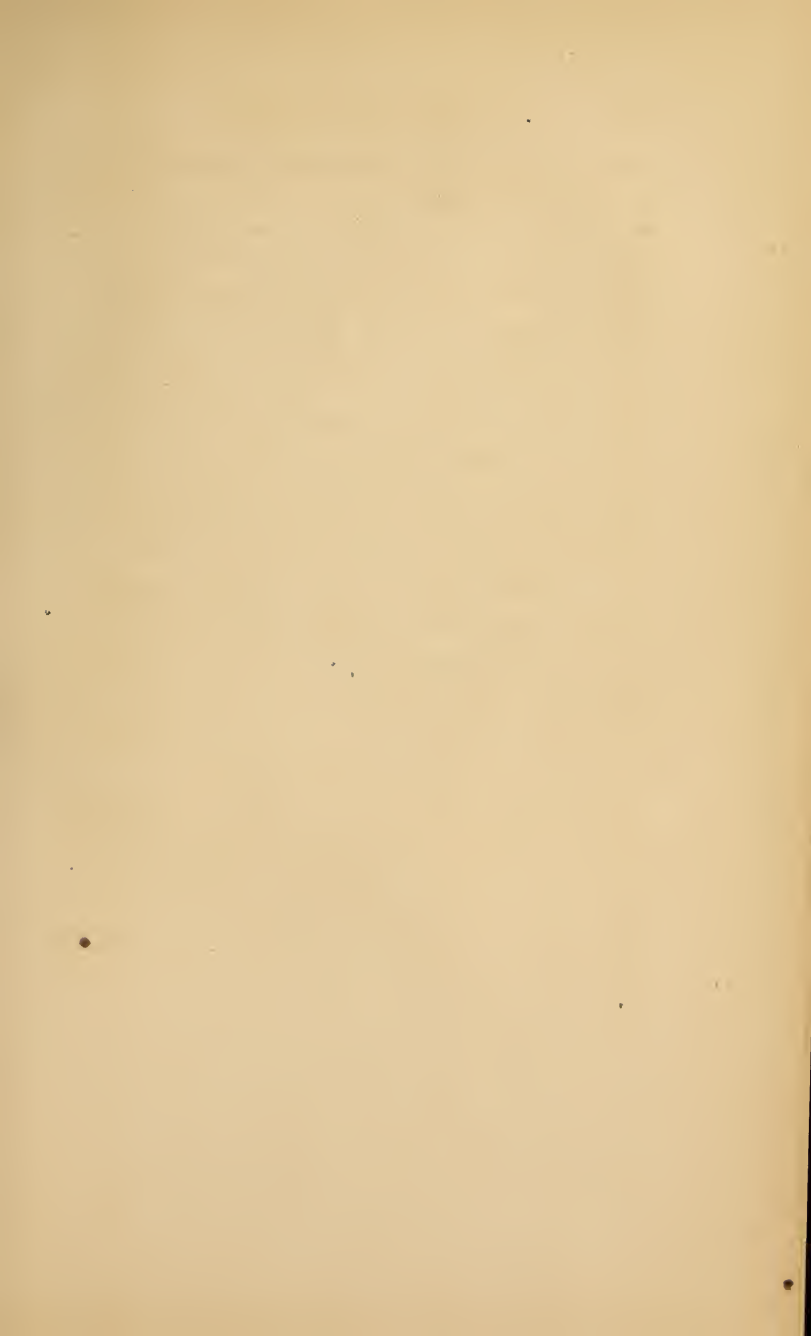
into ploughshares and all spears into pruning-hooks." We boast of our civilization — of the march of mind in this wondrous age ; let us do ourselves the justice to remember that it is a Christian civilization ; that the powers of the human intellect have not only been quickened to the tremendous strides of modern progress by the fine and healthful stimuli which reside, essentially, in the teachings of Christ, but those energies have also been held in check from that fierce motion which precludes destruction, by the same conservative influence. Christ did not only, by his teachings, pour upon the human mind a flood of light ; He also quickened and developed its faculties by furnishing it with motives of superhuman power and perpetual force ; and then, to control and balance all, He set over it the fearful expectancy of a judgment to come.

Wouldst thou be faithful to Christ's Love here ? Do something for the world's mind. Think, write, speak. Fling abroad the energies of thy God-given, illumined, and quickened intellect upon the broad expanse of the world's thought. Thou — even thou — mayest think some thought which will never die, but live to bless the world long after thou art dead.

But the last life-stream of beneficence flowed from the heart of Christ to bless the souls of men. They were perishing, and He redeemed them ; they were dying, and He gave them the precious drops of his own great life. That stream exhausted the heart of Christ — drained the very

sources of his being; but nought recked He, in his sublime self-sacrifice, so it saved the immortal life of men. Their frail bark, wave-tossed and tempest-driven, was drifting upon the black rocks of eternal night, when Christ, the Watcher, lighted, with the flames of Divine justice, his own heart; that the sight of this ghastly beacon might scare them back to safety; and that, by this awful Light, they might see to trim their sails and point their prow towards Heaven. And so the purple life-stream of Christ's beneficence flowed on till it broke, in bloody foam, on the Mount of Crucifixion, and darkened the heavens with its ruby spray. He was "faithful unto death" to thee; be thou "faithful unto death" to Him. Wilt thou? Then love the souls of men as He loved them. Labor, pray, work, give, suffer, die, if need be, for their salvation. Catch the flame of love from the heart of Christ, and suffer it to consume the life. So shalt thou, too, be "faithful unto death."

Note how the two paths, the truth of Christ and the love of Christ, both point to death as the final seal of truth and love. Fidelity to Christ is readiness to die, if need be, alike for the truth of Christ and the love of Christ. "Be thou thus faithful unto death," and He will give thee "a crown of life."







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